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EUROPE UNDER THE NAZIS

Belgium Unvanquished

EUROPE UNDER THE NAZIS

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by

ROGER MOTZ

member of the Belgian Parliament



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First published May, 1942
Second impression August, 1942

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
STEPHEN AUSTIN AND SONS, LTD., HERTFORD

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interests: More than £600,000,000 were invested in these undertakings. At the same time, the Belgian Congo was developed to such an extent that it has become to-day one of the richest colonies in Africa; no less than £500,000,000 sterling were invested in the huge copper mines of the Union Minière, in the gold works of Kilo-Moto, in the diamond and tin ore beds, and in the rubber, coffee, and palm nut plantations.

And during some fifty years of continuous industrial and commercial development, political and social life developed in an atmosphere of confidence and calm, until the terrible disaster of 1914-18. The growth of the working class both in number and importance raised many social problems, which were solved by the adoption of some of the most progressive legislation in Europe.

But in 1914 invasion put an end to this long period of economic prosperity and social progress. Exasperated by the stubborn resistance of the Belgian Army, the German soldiers indulged in a series of crimes and atrocities, which aroused the indignation of all civilized nations. The civil population, including women and children were pitilessly massacred, and the news of the Louvain, Dinant, and Jamines executions awoke in the hearts of patriots a feeling of resentment which has never died down. It was on account of their cruelties in Belgium during August, 1914, that the Germans of the 20th century were first called Huns. Many towns and hundreds of villages were totally or partially destroyed; when the front was stabilized on the Yser, all the towns in the firing line, Ypres, Dixmude, Nieuport, Menin, were razed to the ground by shell-fire. When the estimate of the war damage was given it reached the enormous figure of 150 million pounds.¹

But the crowning and most terrible blow for the nation's currency and credit was the policy of inflation systematically practised by the Germans during the four years of occupation when paper money was issued without any gold coin backing. Before 1914 the gold holding was £12,000,000 and the money in circulation was £42,000,000. The German authorities first of all exacted a war contribution of £20,000,000 a year to be paid by the State, and then imposed various special taxes on all the large towns. At the end of 1918 the country possessed besides £90,000,000 of paper money expressed in Belgian francs, more than £230,000,000 of marks whose only backing was the credit of the Reich which had

¹ To appreciate the tremendous expense which the reconstruction of these towns entailed, one need only compare it with the total sum of the national debt in April, 1914. The latter was only £180,000,000, and represented all the liabilities undertaken by the Belgian State, provinces, and communes over a period of 84 years, from 1830 to 1914.

precisely none at all. Belgian currency therefore had to be devaluated in a proportion of 1 to 7; the small capitalists were ruined and during long and painful years civil servant officials could not be given an adequate salary.

With its credit so seriously depleted the Belgian State had in addition to pay pensions to the dependents of the 46,000 soldiers killed during the war, to the 150,000 wounded soldiers, to those of the 200,000 deported men who had come back ill from German prisons. This meant an extra expense of £10,000,000 a year, which weighed heavily on the State's budget.

Needless to say, Belgium only recovered as reparations a mere fraction of what the 1914-18 German occupation had cost her.

To-day the same methods of economic exploitation have been again imposed on Belgium, but this time on a larger scale, and at a quicker rate of progress, as will be shown later.

But the material ruin of the country was by no means the only havoc wrought in Belgium by the German occupation.

The Germans were faced with the patriotic resistance of the population. The administrative authorities who had remained in the country and in particular the communal authorities performed their duties unflinchingly. In spite of the ever-increasing arrests, in spite of fines imposed on towns and communes, Belgian citizens never failed to reveal their feelings. Just as in this war the Belgians were the first to adopt the 'V' as a sign of their confidence in Victory, so during the years 1914-18 they wore in their buttonholes ivy-leaves as a sign of hope and of their attachment to their invaded Fatherland.

Resistance in the country was led by three famous men who fully symbolized heroic Belgium: King Albert I, Cardinal Mercier, and Burgomaster Adolph Max.

During the first three years of the occupation, the German administration was in the hands of General von Bissing, a hard and unscrupulous man and well versed in duplicity. In order to quell the resistance of the people he set out to split Belgium by provoking hostility between the Flemings and the Walloons. He tried to win over the feelings of the militant section of the Flemings, by ordering the University of Ghent to be made a purely Flemish University. A bill to this effect had been put before the Belgian Chamber before the war, and was being discussed. This was really the beginning of a large scale political manoeuvre. And indeed in April, 1916, a whole series of decrees were published which aimed at dividing and weakening the administrative authorities of the Belgian provinces. The intention of the occupation authorities was to make this the basis of the future protectorate

which the German Empire would enjoy over occupied Belgium. According to von Bissing's very words 'it was not a question of creating a state of things which might give birth to hopes, but one which laid the foundation of the permanent conditions of Belgian internal politics'. Even if Belgium should win back her freedom, these decrees would reduce her to a state of moral confusion, internal disorder, and to impotence as a European Power. Their aim was to destroy utterly the work of the 1830 Liberal Revolution which had made Belgium an independent state and turned her sympathies towards London and Paris. In December, 1916, the German Professor, K. Buckheim, wrote: 'In Belgium our mortal enemy is Anglo-French culture, that is to say Western Europe represented by the political idea brought into being by its revolutions. It is chiefly this idea which gave birth to the Belgian State. Our enemy in Belgium is the spirit of this Western European political culture which preached a Holy War against us in most of the capitals of Europe.'

The Prussian General echoed the words of the German Professor. In a posthumous document which was called a sort of political testament, von Bissing, Governor-General, tried to show that the annexation of Belgium to Germany was indispensable from the point of view of the strategic and industrial interests of the Empire. He wrote:—'An independent or neutral Belgium or a Belgium whose position would be determined by treaties of some other kind, will be, as in pre-war days, subject to the harmful influence of Great Britain and France and will be an easy prey for America who is seeking to utilize Belgian assets. To guard against this there is only one line of policy to adopt—the policy of force, and it is force which will make the population, at the moment still hostile, accept and submit to German domination.' As for his administrative policy, the General with appalling cynicism defined it in the following terms:—'A dictatorship based on military force is the only administrative reform there is to choose.' And the dim and distant aims of his policy of division became quite evident when General von Bissing made an indirect allusion to the traitors and activist agitators who had followed him, by saying 'I have tried to establish links quietly but even from the beginning these links have often been broken: however, it is enough that from these attempts at rapprochement something still remains—even though the results are wrapped in mystery'.

In order to put into effect this underhand policy General von Bissing had constituted a so-called 'Conseil des Flandres', consisting of twenty or so Flemish school-teachers and semi-intellectuals who were the precursors of present-day quislings. The German

authorities never bothered to grant them any authority whatsoever, and when Dr. Borms, their leader, wanted to organize a sort of Flemish 'gendarmierie' (forerunner of the present-day 'protection troops') with a view to protecting the traitors against frequent attacks by patriots, the Germans categorically refused to hear of it. But the 1918 defeat in no way affected their plans, and in a sense the Weimar Republic continued the policy of General von Bissing. Belgian traitors who fled to Germany when the Kaiser's army was defeated found there shelter and protection; they were given posts in High Schools and on newspaper staffs. They founded families there and their children became German. It thus happens that the Brussels wireless station is at present directed by the German officer Verhees, a son of Dr. Verhees, who in 1917 was a member of the *Conseil des Flandres*. Such are the results of the policy of establishing 'links' which General von Bissing had begun in 1914-18 under the cloak of secrecy.

His intention was to pursue ceaselessly and with absolute consistency a line of policy destined to sow internal discord in Belgium, and to weaken her so that she would be unable to play any part in the balance of power. It will be seen later that the Nazis in 1940 virtually resumed the policy begun in 1914 by General von Bissing. But they did so with less respect for individual liberty, for the political institutions of the country, the traditions and the customs of the people, and with an unshakeable determination to adapt quickly and forcibly the internal organizations of Belgium to those of the 3rd Reich.

Needless to say, after having seen so much material destruction wrought during four years—so many subversive machinations carried out against national unity sometimes by force, sometimes by treachery—Belgians remembered the German occupation as the most fearful, the most cruel experience. Moreover, their country had been ruined in spite of the allied victory. Thus their reaction towards national-socialist policy during the years preceding the 1940 war had been very different from that of other small powers in Western Europe, such as Holland, Denmark, and Norway. They never had any faith in German sincerity, and always firmly believed that force was the only means of opposing Nazi undertakings; they also accepted military sacrifices, which were proportionately greater than those made by many other European nations, and which enabled them to mobilize 600,000 men in 1939. But since Belgians had a more realistic and more precise idea of what a German occupation was really like—poverty, famine, humiliations, the constant threat of arrest—the desire to flee before the invader was shared by a considerable number of people, especially by the

intellectuals—who knew what lay in store for them in the way of Prussian brutality and Nazi hatred.

Such were the feelings which the German occupation of 1914-18 provoked in the hearts of Belgians. To their cost they had learnt what tremendous offensive power and ruthless, organized oppression the Germans had developed, and they had no illusions about them. They knew that a second invasion would complete the ruin of the country, would in fact turn one of the richest countries in Europe into a nation overburdened with debt. Disappointed as they had been in their hopes of war reparations, they could not believe that war was a good thing for anybody. The severe trials endured by a starving population, the disintegrating and corrupting influence of a long foreign occupation, the disillusionment attendant on a dearly won victory are likely to arouse in a people, plunged once more into a war they did not provoke, feelings of apprehension and bitterness. They realized that in the event of a German attack it would be impossible to hold the enemy at the frontiers, and even according to the most optimistic forecast, a large section of the national soil lying between the Meuse and the German frontier would have to be abandoned to the enemy. It meant, surely then, that the terrible trials of 1914-18, with their unceasing accompaniment of ruin, of poverty and famine, would inevitably occur once more. The memory of these hardships explained the deep desire of the majority of Belgians to go to war only in the event of a new German aggression.

CHAPTER 2

How Belgium Faced Disaster

IN September, 1939, Belgium found herself in a very different position from that of the other small Powers of the European continent. Ever since the 7th March, 1936, when the Locarno Pact was denounced by Germany and the Rhineland reoccupied by the Reichswehr, she had feared a second European conflagration. She had prepared herself for this as best she could: the entire system of defensive fortifications had been developed on her Eastern borders opposite the German frontier, the period of military service had been considerably lengthened, and permanent covering troops had been stationed along the frontiers. The great majority of Belgians were convinced that Germany represented the only menace to their country. The signing of the Munich treaty in September, 1938, had been greeted with very mixed feelings: satisfaction at seeing the conflict postponed for a period of time, which at that moment it seemed must be long; terror at the thought of the considerable increase in power that this meant for Germany: and a profound sympathy for the brave Czechoslovak nation, sacrificed for the sake of peace. These feelings had nothing in common with the outburst of confidence and optimism which swept the whole of French public opinion and even certain sections of British public opinion when they heard that Herr Hitler would make no further territorial claims. All those living in Belgium at this moment realized that although the Belgians were relieved that they had not to fight immediately, they had no illusions about the future and knew that storm clouds still hung over the horizon.

In order to understand fully the Belgian mentality during the period which separates the Treaty of Munich, September, 1938, from the German attack of the 10th May, 1940, one important fact must be taken into consideration: the nation had unshakeable confidence in its army. Belgium's population numbers only 8,500,000, but during the 1914-18 war the Belgian army had won outstanding glory. She began the campaign with a little over 100,000 men who were insufficiently equipped and trained; at Liege General Leman had held out with 30,000 men against the 150,000 men of Von Emmich's army; after a long and arduous retreat the army had repelled in open country on the muddy banks of the River Yser and with only 48,000 rifles the desperate assaults of 100,000 Germans. In 1918, she had in her turn taken the offensive

and when the armistice was made had driven the invader from Ypres to Ghent. If all that had been accomplished in 1914 with 100,000 men, what could not be done in 1940 with 600,000 men?

The extent of Belgium's military effort can be seen from the following comparison: If France and Great Britain in May, 1940, had had armies equal in proportion to their population they would have had 120 and 140 divisions. Moreover, although they were determined not to fight unless attacked by Germany, although they knew better than any other nation what a foreign invasion was like, they were firmly resolved to meet invasion with armed opposition and to defend themselves to the last. The rapid defeat of the Polish army in September, 1939, had not caused them any surprise, although the barbarous methods of war practised by the Germans had filled them with anger and indignation. The Polish army only consisted of about 30 divisions stretched along a front more than 600 miles in length, without any fortifications, constructive works, almost without any natural lines of defence. Defeat was inevitable in spite of her traditional fighting qualities and her heroic courage. Few people realized the true significance of this tragic event which ought to have opened so many eyes in Western Europe. But everybody sought comfort in the belief that the situation of the Polish army was in no way similar to that of the Belgian army, which consisted of 24 divisions, mobilized for many months and firmly entrenched along a front which was not more than 90 miles long. Were they not protected in the north by a Dutch army of nearly 400,000 men? And above all else, in the event of her being attacked, she could surely count not only on the help of the British expeditionary force massed in the Lille region, but also on that formidable and glorious French army, the best on the Continent, the army which had fought for Saint Louis, for Louis XIV, for Napoleon I, the army of the Marne, of Verdun, the army which would achieve victory and liberty. These were the sort of optimistic remarks Belgians exchanged with each other up till the eve of the conflict. If they were attacked they would know how to fight. They certainly did not underestimate the fighting strength, the discipline, or the efficiency of the German army. But they knew the Germans perhaps better than other nations. They may have seen the arrogant and triumphal processions of 1914, but they had also witnessed the 1918 retreat. They knew how quickly Germany's moral resistance could collapse, her courage vanish, and her sheeplike submissiveness turn to revolt. In 1918 they had seen the invaders fighting and shooting among themselves in the streets of Brussels, they had seen officers' epaulettes torn off by privates, the red flag hoisted on military wagons; clothes, medicine, and

equipment sold to civilians for a few marks; the incredible confusion of a German army in retreat, gunners returning home with a cow tied to their bag-rack, infantrymen dragging a cage full of rabbits and selling a few specimens at every stage of their journey. They had witnessed all that and knew that what had happened in the past would surely recur in the future.

So, with their army fully prepared, they awaited the inevitable attack, without enthusiasm, but also without panic.

But what was really happening? It was obvious that Germany was preparing for a quick war in which victory would be won by a smashing offensive; this was in complete conformity with her national interests, her needs and her economic structure. She had by no means forgotten the previous war, the effect of the blockade, the gradual attrition which had brought her to the final collapse. Therefore the Nazis had to strike quickly and powerfully so as to avoid a recurrence of that fatal experience. They had to bring to the highest possible degree of efficiency all offensive weapons: the bomber, the tank, the flame-projector, the parachutist, confusion and terror in the enemy's rear, and massacre of the civil population.

France on the contrary counted on prolonged siege warfare, and placed her confidence in defensive arms: fortifications, heavy artillery, a navy patrolling the seas and depriving the enemy of the sources of her raw materials. Belgium had no option but to follow French strategy. The narrowness of her country made it impossible to organize a defence in depth, for a retreat of 60 miles would mean that Belgians would be fighting with their backs to the sea, and with capitulation in sight. It was inconceivable for the army of a small nation to use offensive weapons if the chief power in which she depended in the event of an attack chose the very opposite method of warfare. But once the Maginot Line was constructed it should have been continued northwards by a line of fortifications, and the enemy's attack met behind these lines. But according to the theories of General Gleise von Horstenau, in this mad race between the offensive and defensive weapons of warfare, there exists at the beginning a lag of several months, sometimes of one or two years, during which the offensive holds a marked advantage. And the German High Command understood this. They knew that it would never be possible to bring off in the spring of 1941 what could succeed, and what did in fact succeed, in May, 1940.

The country was put on the alert during two serious crises in November, 1939, and in January, 1940, and these had acted as a sort of dress rehearsal for mobilization. But many Belgians thought that one day things would take a turn for the worse, and

that they would find themselves at war: the important thing was to face this terrible danger with dignity.

Therefore in spite of a surprise raid at 5 a.m., the 10th May passed very quietly in Brussels. There were no demonstrations in the streets, and no trace of panic; only the first British armoured cars passing through the centre of the town about four o'clock in the afternoon were greeted with enthusiasm all along their way. The great majority of men who were of military age had been called up several months before, and in the stations there were very few heart-breaking scenes of soldiers' farewells.

The afternoon session of the Chamber on the 10th May passed off with calm and dignity except when the French and British Ambassadors appeared in the diplomats gallery, but the declarations made by M. Pierlot and M. Spaak were greeted with unanimous approval by all members, even by the Flemish-nationalists and Rexists who were present at the session. Since King Leopold III had taken immediate command of the army he was not able to attend, and did not deliver any message to parliament.

From the afternoon of the 11th May bad news started arriving in Brussels: it was learnt that there had been terrible fighting on the Albert canal and that contrary to all forecasts, the Germans had already crossed the canal that day. This was indeed a serious miscalculation and a tremendous disillusionment, but not the sort of news to arouse panic.

But soon the population of Eastern Belgium flowed back towards Brussels and the tales told by refugees clearly showed that the cruel methods of warfare carried out in Poland in 1939 were being renewed in Belgium: columns of refugees had been machine-gunned along the roads by German airman and small towns of no strategic importance such as Tongres, St. Trond, Tirlemont had been bombarded: civilian trains had been attacked and passengers machine-gunned in the ditches. Immediately, all the dreadful memories of the invasion and the occupation of 1914, were brought back to the minds of Belgians—the massacres at Louvain, Tamines, and Dinant, the shooting of civilians, and then afterwards the horror of four years of misery, humiliation, famine, and arbitrary executions. The only aim the Germans had in bombing Belgian towns was to terrorize the civilian population. During the bombardment of Brussels which took place on the 10th May, 1940, the military objective at which the German pilots aimed was the Evere aerodrome situated five miles from the centre of the town. That did not prevent the Germans from dropping their bombs three miles away from their objective right in the midst of residential districts. Similarly one might look in vain for a military objective



German tanks drawn up on the Belgium frontier on the morning of 10th May, ready to invade Belgium (German war photograph)



German cyclists passing through the British War Memorial, the Menin Gate, at Ypres.

in the public squares of Nivelles and Tournai, which were razed to the ground. Thus was started this tremendous movement of the population which pushed two million Belgians first of all towards the west and south of the country, and then into France.

As early as the 10th May a black-out was enforced throughout the country. In Brabant public houses were only open from 11.30 a.m. until 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The Government ordered general mobilization and martial law was declared: the Ministries were under military guard, schools were closed throughout the country. The number of pages in Belgian newspapers which had varied from sixteen to twenty-eight was reduced to four. On every window appeared yards of gummed paper hastily stuck on by the owners.

As the Germans advanced farther into the country they met with towns and villages whose entire economic activity had come to a standstill. All the industries working for national defence had been transferred: their staffs had left for France—engineers, technicians, specially skilled workers—taking with them their most precious tools and machinery, first of all to Paris, then to Toulouse and Bordeaux. This tremendous civilian withdrawal had been thought out and organized by hundreds of manufacturers who were all determined that they would go and work in France rather than work for the enemy in the event of the country being overrun by the Germans. Similarly a large part of railway material was evacuated.

When, on the 17th May, German columns reached Brussels they found a half deserted town: the tram service was no longer functioning because the bridges had been destroyed by the Allied troops as they retreated: for several days there was neither water, gas, nor coal in the capital. The canals were blocked by numerous barges sunk by Belgian troops. In the absence of bridges the inhabitants crossed the canals by the lock-gates; and as these were not wide enough for two-way traffic pedestrians were only allowed to cross for five minutes in each direction alternately. But sometimes people had to await their turn for more than half an hour. The effect of the German occupation made itself felt immediately; as early as the 23rd May it was noticed in Brussels that the shops in the suburbs were not so well supplied with foodstuffs. On the 29th May the first repressive measures of the German military authority came into force: a notice posted on the walls of Brussels threatened men between the ages of 18 and 45 with deportation in the event of a German soldier being attacked by a member of the civil population.

German attempts at alienating Belgians from the Allied cause

soon became evident. In occupied territory there was published on the 30th May a dispatch from the German Official News Agency protesting against M. Reynaud's accusations. This dispatch affirmed that if Belgium was forced to abandon the struggle without bringing it to any conclusion, it was as tactless as it was disloyal to accuse the Belgian army of having created this debacle on the Allied front. For only the incompetency of the French army and of the Expeditionary Force which failed to preserve Belgium from the horrors of war placed the Belgian army in a situation which forced the King to take his decision. The hypocrisy and treachery of German propaganda in occupied Belgium excelled itself in this declaration which appeared to undertake the defence of the honour of the Belgian army, but with a view to instigating a national movement against the Allies.

And all the while the enormous wave of refugees, driven farther and farther away by the German army, swept towards the south.

All those who lived through this odyssey will never forget those glorious days of May and June, 1940. The days slipped by one after the other with their blue sky, bright sun, and starry nights. Never for years had the weather been so mild, nature so prodigal. It was as if France wanted for the last time to display all the charms of her beauty before it wilted. Alas, in these beautiful towns, so rich in famous memories, in these smiling countrysides, these lovely vineyards, one could see nothing but endless columns of men and women, bowed down with sorrow, fatigue, and care.

In the provinces of the centre and south of France, no preparations had been made to receive such a large number of refugees. In spite of the devoted efforts of the French authorities, and in spite of the hospitality of many families, it was impossible to find suitable accommodation for two million Belgians in addition to five million French people from the north. The small towns, the sparsely populated southern villages, often dirty and dusty and ill-equipped, living a sleepy existence under the bright southern sun, did not know what to do with the stream of vehicles of every description bringing with them scores of men, often hysterical, sometimes haggard, their strength and courage broken. A large part of South-West France, comprising mainly the departments of Haute-Garonne, Ariège, Hérault, Hautes Pyrénées, Pyrénées Orientales, Gers, Tarn et Garonne, had been reserved for the Belgian refugees. In this region the concentration of refugees was so great that the population of the town of Toulouse—to take but one example—which was 150,000 inhabitants in September, 1939, had risen to 700,000 at the end of May, 1940. At nights

refugees slept on the pavements of La Grande Place du Capitole. It was the same in the railway station, where hundreds of them lay together on the platforms. The wave of Belgian refugees was followed by an influx of French people from the North of France, and then from the Paris region: the situation became rapidly worse, and finally it became chaotic. The French authorities paid the Belgian refugees a compensation allowance of 10 francs (1s. 6d.) per day, and this was put down to the account of the Belgian Government. This amount became rapidly inadequate owing to the sudden rise in the cost of living. In these conditions it is not difficult to understand how great were the physical and moral sufferings of Belgian refugees in France. The Belgians were a people who had enjoyed at home a very high standard of living: from September, 1939, to May, 1940, the war raging in Europe had in no way affected their material conditions; and then suddenly within a few days they found themselves thrown out of home and country, their daily routine upset, condemned to walk hundreds of miles over congested roads without a roof or a bed, often without any means of support, obliged every day to flee farther and farther away, using the most incredible means of transport.

To add to all these physical sufferings came the news of the capitulation of the army on the 28th May, 1940; this and the shame and grief which they felt at M. Reynaud's violent attacks against King Leopold III, their sorrowful discovery that from that moment the attitude of the French people became, if not hostile, at least much colder and less sympathetic than before, were all so many unexpected happenings which can explain why Belgians would have had every excuse in giving themselves up to despair and weariness.

The reactions of the French people during the 28th May from the moment of M. Paul Reynaud's unjust and virulent speech to M. Pierlot's solemn assurances that Belgium would continue the fight were, as might be expected, rather violent. During their long and glorious history the French have often twisted a military defeat into a betrayal. Although it is true that the great majority of the French people had no desire to hold the Belgian refugees responsible for what they deemed an act of treachery, yet at the same time regrettable excesses were committed and the deep friendship they had felt for one another as brothers in arms was destroyed. This was especially painful for a large number of our fellow citizens who looked upon Belgo-Franco-British solidarity as the basis of our foreign policy.

But the days which followed were even more gloomy. At Poitiers, where the Belgian Government was holding office, and

where the chief Government departments had established themselves, and at Limoges, where the offices of the Chamber and of the Senate had taken up their quarters, there prevailed an atmosphere of confusion and perplexity. These two towns were not prepared to receive such a large number of visitors and each one camped where he could. Relief committees had been set up to deal with the refugees, but they were continually shifted by orders from the French services which had to cope with an ever-increasing number of ministerial offices pouring into the provinces from Paris.

At Bordeaux hundreds of thousands of people, helpless, idle, most of them already without means of support, tramped the streets of the town. A large number of them ate in canteens and slept in schools.

Something sinister was brewing which portended defeat and collapse.

Gradually material confusion brought in its wake mental confusion. The most improbable stories began to circulate. The catastrophic swiftness with which events had been enacted had puzzled the best minds, had shattered the most firmly rooted opinions, and broken everyone's courage. After the desperate appeal made to President Roosevelt by the President of the French cabinet, a wave of panic suddenly swept the country. Everyone realized that the situation must be desperate if politicians could indulge in the feeble hope that even a declaration of war on the part of the United States could stop the tanks waiting outside the gates of Paris. The French Government's decision not to defend the capital confirmed the impression which was growing daily stronger that French resistance was broken. The situation became even more serious after Italy had declared war. From that moment the fate of all Belgians was in the hands of the French authorities. Although Italy was not at war with Belgium at that time, it was out of the question to go there, since all diplomatic relations had been broken off. The vile and cowardly action of the Italian Government had, moreover, filled the Belgians with the greatest disgust. Spain, who was starving, was very uneasy about the immense crowds of refugees which were gathering at the foot of the Pyrenees. Moreover, Germany was all-powerful there; the Gestapo controlled the international police, and all passports and visas. What Belgians had done during the Civil War for Spanish children, both Republican and Nationalists, seemed to have been forgotten long ago.

On Monday, the 17th June, 1940, Marshal Pétain, who had just been appointed President of the Cabinet, conveyed at 1 o'clock in

the afternoon by a wireless message his intention of appealing to Herr Hitler's generosity to grant an Armistice.

He spoke of 'peace with honour' and of 'the lies which have done us harm'. . . . His voice seemed to tremble and to be so far away . . . and when it had faded, a tragic silence occurred for a few interminable seconds . . . then something happened, something unexpected, heartrending, overwhelming: the Marseillaise was played . . .

For all Belgians in France this was the end. The end of a world. The end of the civilization of Western Europe, of nations who loved liberty and restraint, of independent minds, of free men.


The nation 'without whom the world would feel lonely' as Annunzio said, had abandoned herself, had abandoned her friends.

One of the clauses of the Armistice, which was signed a few days later, stipulated that the French authorities would not allow former Allies who could bear arms to leave the country. Under German pressure this clause was quickly applied to the Belgians. From the end of June, 1940, after the last Allied ships had left French ports, it became extremely difficult to reach England. The defeat had revived in the hearts of certain Frenchmen, especially among officers and officials who belonged to the Vichy group, feelings of bitterness and their relations with our fellow-countrymen were far from being cordial. Previously the French had shown themselves understanding and generous in spite of all the vicissitudes of war, but now they became suspicious, interfering, and dictatorial under the influence of Vichy orders. It may be said that, as a general rule, the officials who were willing to help the Belgian refugees were all admirers of the General de Gaulle or else enemies of Germany. But for the Vichy puppets the Belgians were undesirable foreigners who should be sent back to their country as quickly as possible. Moreover, they applied the armistice clauses very rigorously and had all Belgians who tried to reach England arrested. Thus tens of thousands of Belgians who wanted to get to England to continue the struggle there were prevented and forced to return to their unfortunate country.

The part of France which was not occupied by the Germans was the poorest, the worst equipped from the economic point of view. It numbered 16 million inhabitants who were joined by 10 million French and Belgian refugees. There could be no question of keeping them there; food, resources, accommodation, hospital arrangements, all these were inadequate to deal with such an increase in the population.

So the Belgians returned to their occupied country slowly and sadly, along bombarded roads, over emergency bridges, through

half destroyed stations, with scattered railway trucks left behind by the Germans. Yet in spite of the gloomy prospect of staying far away from their country among a people embittered, bewildered, and strictly supervised by the Vichy police, tens of thousands of Belgians remained in unoccupied France rather than submit to the Hitler yoke. In October, 1940, there were still nearly 100,000 Belgian refugees in France, but a year later only 10,000 still remained for political reasons in the unoccupied zone. The majority of them live in the most appalling material conditions; they are subjected to police restrictions and are not allowed to move without due authorization. They often live under the threat of being sent to labour camps, but journalists, writers, and politicians continue resolutely to prefer, as an alternative to the darkness of German oppression, to live in the former glory of France, where the illusion of liberty still remains.





German troops enter Antwerp



A Belgian family flees from the invader.



Belgians used every form of conveyance to escape to France
A stop for a hurried meal under the midday sun



CHAPTER 3

The Development of National Consciousness

WILLIAM L. SHIRER, the American journalist, in the account of his travels given in his *Berlin Diary*, tells how he spent the 15th August, 1940, at Ostend. The German authorities had invited him to attend the air offensive directed against Great Britain. In the evening, after the Germans had retired for the night, the proprietor of the hotel where Mr. Shirer was staying, invited him to drink a bottle of wine with his family. The author describes in these terms the feelings expressed during this friendly gathering: 'Some local Belgians joined us and we had much good talk. It was touching how the Belgians kept hoping the British bombers would come over. They did not seem to mind if the British bumped them off if only the R.A.F. got the Germans too.' Such were the true feelings of the Belgian people at the peak of the German offensive against Great Britain. They did not wait until this offensive was smashed before showing their feelings of solidarity and admiration for the heroic defenders of that liberty without which life had no meaning for them.

Nevertheless the hundreds of thousands of Belgians coming back from France met with a situation which, to most of them, was to say the least, unexpected. The attitude of the Germans, far from being reminiscent of the brutal outbursts of the 1914 troopers, was correct and even surprisingly polite. The officers were fond of repeating that the war between Belgium and Germany was over, that one must look to the future, to the reconstruction of the country, and to a new era of collaboration. Powerful propaganda supported by the Brussels radio swept the country; its aim was to set the Belgians against their former Allies, and also to set the working class against the bourgeois who, 'by escaping to France had abandoned the people to their fate.' This propaganda represented the Germans as remedying social injustices, and bringing order and prosperity to the country.

One of the chief causes responsible for the confused state of mind prevalent among Belgians between July and September, 1940, was the existence of two different attitudes; on the one hand, the opinion of the six million Belgians who had lived through the events of May and June in the country, and on the other hand the opinion of the two millions who had experienced them in France. It should be realized that we are talking of people whose experience of the war had been entirely different. In Brussels as

early as June, 1940, there existed a propaganda bureau (*Propaganda Staffel Brussel*), which had complete up-to-date information about what was happening inside the country. The bureau consisted of the official correspondents of the German newspapers, some of whom had lived in Belgium for many years, and also certain 'press attachés' who had come from Paris and London during the period of neutrality from September, 1939, to May, 1940. Their duties consisted in editing the *Brusseler Zeitung*, a paper intended for Germans residing in Belgium and in Northern France, in censoring the controlled press, and in drawing up news commentaries for the German controlled Brussels radio. It was this group of German propagandists who launched a vast press campaign against the Belgian authorities coming back into the country.

What reasons lay behind this scheming?

It should be remembered that to a certain extent it was people belonging to the world of politics, to the higher grades of the civil service, to the newspaper world and to University circles who had followed the Government to France, as well as most people, who before the war had given public expression to their anti-Nazi opinions. It must not be inferred from this that those who had remained in the country were favourably disposed towards the invaders; there were amongst these people tens of thousands of officials who, in accordance with the laws mobilizing civilians, were unable to leave their posts, workers without means, families frightened by the congested roads, and the disorganization of the means of transport, doctors who had stayed with their patients, priests who had decided to continue administering to the spiritual needs of their unhappy parishioners. And there were still 600,000 men who had been called up. But one thing is certain: on the whole the majority of Belgians who had left the country was mainly composed of people who had given evidence of active opposition to all pro-Nazi tendencies, whether Rexist or Flemish-Nationalist. And when, after the French Armistice, these people were obliged, through lack of means, to return to Belgium, it was obviously in German interests to discredit them in the eyes of Belgians who had stayed in the country.

The Germans knew that there were among these a large number of opponents holding important political and social positions; they were determined not to allow them to become active, and to paralyse them by abuse, by threats, and sanctions. The enemy controlled press and the Brussels controlled radio obeyed the Nazi instructions with truly remarkable consistency and energy by pursuing for months a fierce campaign against all the authorities who had left the country. Certain cases of desertion of posts were

prosecuted by Belgian tribunals in accordance with the law of the 5th March, 1935, dealing with the mobilization of officials, and mild penalties, usually conditional, were imposed. But the Germans systematically exploited this law by issuing a decree ordering the large scale dismissal of a great number of burgomasters and police commissioners without giving the latter any opportunity of defending themselves, without even giving them a hearing. University professors were treated in the same way. The victims were naturally opposed to Nazi ideas. This was not the first time that the Germans had abused Belgian laws in order to attack their political opponents: and it will be seen later how they made use of the law of the 10th May, 1940, concerning the administration of occupied territories. After the capitulation the attitude of the Belgian politicians in France was disparaged, slandered, and wilfully misrepresented. In actual fact, what the Germans never forgave was not the attitude of certain politicians towards the King, but rather and above all, the resolution taken by Chamber and Senate at Limoges to continue the struggle in spite of the capitulation of the army. These politicians were unable to defend themselves either in the press or by radio: they were attacked by the Rexist and Flemish-nationalists, traitors in enemy pay—curious defenders of a King whose country they sought to destroy—and some of them were abused and insulted. German propaganda gave the greatest publicity to these incidents. They wanted above all to discredit these men in the eyes of the public, to deprive them of all authority and prestige among Belgians who had stayed in the country, and in this way to prevent them exercising any influence contrary to German interests.

These were the beginnings of the first large scale propaganda manoeuvre of the Germans which aimed at creating a split in Belgian public opinion, at paralysing those elements most strongly opposed to the New Order, at establishing a confused state of mind among Belgians so as to prevent any form of resistance, whether passive or underground, being organized against the invader.

The feeling which predominated among Belgians who had remained in their country was that of resignation. For the greater part of them the disaster had been too swift and too appalling for them to entertain any hope of salvation. The only thing to do was to adapt themselves to the new situation. The population felt a deep-rooted desire for the return to a more or less normal existence. On the other hand, the refugees coming back from France had a feverish desire to see their home again, to have their own roof over their heads, freed from the obligation of living on the kindness or pity of a foreign people. The blame was thrown on

everything which hindered a return to a normal life—all those whose absence prevented business and public services functioning regularly. There were people who naïvely entertained the illusion that the war was over for Belgium, and who were getting impatient, because things were slow in settling down again to the pattern of pre-invasion days. Some people who were easily impressed, were greatly struck by the order and correctness prevailing among the German troops, by the feelings of comradeship existing between officers and soldiers, by the close fellowship which appeared to unite all classes of society. All those who had leanings towards totalitarian doctrines came to the conclusion that national socialism had succeeded in establishing a moral order superior to that of the democracies. They were very eager to see far-reaching changes take place in their country's institutions. Somewhat naïvely they liked to believe that Belgians would continue to have some say in the planning of these institutions.

Slowly the factories started to work again and train services were resumed. The greater part of the manufacturers decided to start work again, because they feared that if Belgium obstinately refused to continue her industrial production Germany would not allow food to be imported. And without the foodstuffs coming from other countries Belgian people could not live. Therefore in order to transport the food for the population, the train services had to be resumed.

From this point of view the situation was very different in 1940 from what it had been in 1914. At that time the Belgian Government was in France and succeeded in getting funds through secretly via Holland to pay unemployed railway officials and agents in occupied territory. It was impossible to repeat this policy with Holland occupied by the Germans and France entirely under control of the Vichy Government. Also, during the previous occupation the Committee for Relief in Belgium had brought into the country several hundreds of thousands of tons of American foodstuffs which had saved the population from famine. Things were no longer the same in 1940: the guarantees given from 1914-18 with regard to the destination of these food stocks could no longer be repeated, and it was not to be expected that the British Government would slacken the blockade which it had extended to almost the whole of Europe. People had to work in order to live . . . there was no other way out. Thus the period from the 15th June to the 15th August was one of the most terrible despondency.

For a few weeks the traitors triumphed. As in every great national catastrophe types of men came to the surface who were anxious to rebuild their fortune on the ruins of their country,

and whom Cicero long ago described as being 'plunged in debt and crime'. In Brussels committees of unscrupulous employees and corrupt journalists took charge of certain leading newspapers: business men of shady reputation took it upon themselves to herald Belgo-German economic collaboration: the Rexist and Flemish-National parties unleashed all at once the brood of traitors which they had been carefully forming for years. Thus appeared the mob of criminals which exists in all modern societies; not having sufficient courage in peacetime to commit an open offence against the laws, they wait for invasion, catastrophe, and panic before lifting their heads and showing themselves in their true light. These sinister individuals were few in number, but at this period of confusion their triumph was so obvious and the powerlessness of the patriots so complete that they did a great deal to intensify the general disorder and demoralization.

For their part the German authorities, while trying to win the sympathy of the population, strove to destroy their affection for their constitutional institutions and for their lawful government. Speaking of the difficult situation in which the country found itself, the Brussels radio, on the 3rd August, 1940, did not hesitate to say: 'When the German Government wished to study the economic situation of the country, it could not find any statistics, or any work dealing with this subject in Belgium. The Belgian authorities had omitted to accumulate food stocks. Certain Belgian officials have neither adequate culture nor technical ability. Belgian life has always been subject to the basest political influences....' But their most violent attacks were naturally directed against the politicians, as soon as they saw that those coming back from France were exercising a certain influence on the population. After affirming that the Belgian politicians were in the pay of the British plutocracy, the Brussels radio said on the 7th August, 1940: 'Their most serious crime lies in the calling up of all our young men in order to send them abroad where they have suffered from hunger. . . . Having organized the debacle of our poor country they fled and sought refuge abroad, taking our gold, which allowed them to live ostentatiously. Do these gentlemen think all that is forgotten? The last scene will be enacted in a court of law, and they will be judged by the people.' It is clear from these quotations that the so-called 'crimes' with which the Belgian Government is most often reproached, are that they ordered the army reserve to leave the country for the purpose of building up an army in France, and that they put Belgian gold out of German reach. Having dubbed 'limogeards' the deputies and senators who had been present at the Limoges meeting, the traitors levelled vague and

sinister threats against them to the effect that 'these gentlemen should not, however, indulge in any illusions' (8th August) 'the indifference which they inspire is deceptive and will not last. . . . As for the crimes of which they are accused, they are manifold. . . . The Limoges betrayal is indeed enormous, but if it is true to say that they all betrayed us after the 10th May, it is also true that Belgium had already been betrayed before that date and sold to France and England. It is now the entire regime which is responsible . . . this regime where everybody could say, write, and do whatever they liked without incurring the slightest risk. . . .'

At this time Great Britain's determination to continue the struggle was awakening the first hopes and encouraging the first demonstrations of the true feelings of the Belgian people.

From this point of view it is impossible to exaggerate the far-reaching effects on all invaded peoples of the splendid attitude of Great Britain who was continuing alone the struggle against a German Empire which had conquered the whole of Europe. The immortal words spoken at this time by Mr. Winston Churchill awoke an echo in every Belgian heart, and brought light and hope to a people who had been living in darkness and despair. Everyone was conscious of a tremendous wave of courage wafted to them by a great nation bravely resolved to live or die free. Since those glorious hours Great Britain's courage has won for her the first place in every Belgian heart.

Very soon the Belgians began to make known to their oppressors their true feelings. The attacks launched by the German radio in Brussels against those who would not accept the new order of things, criticisms in the German controlled papers, are clear proof that from the end of July, 1940, the Belgian masses were again clearly showing their spirit of patriotic independence.

On the 26th July, 1940, the news bulletin of the Brussels radio told of secret pamphlets being circulated among the population of Antwerp, and recalled the strict laws against this decreed by the German authorities.

Belgians arriving from occupied territory to join the Belgian army in Great Britain have told how, from the middle of July, people began to wear in their buttonholes tricolour badges and miniature British and Free French flags. The first rebukes addressed to local authorities about anti-German writings on walls date from this period. Pro-British demonstrations in cinemas became more and more frequent, and on German orders were forbidden by the police.

From this period flowers were placed daily on the tomb of the

Unknown Belgian Warrior, on the war memorials, and with special fervour on the graves of British soldiers. In Brussels, in front of the monument in 'La Place Poelaert' erected to the memory of British soldiers who fell during the Great War, lies a carpet of flowers renewed every day. One Sunday morning a group of Rexists thought a good way of manifesting their anglophobia would be to remove these flowers, and place them on the unknown Belgian soldier's grave: they were immediately hooted by the crowd and had to be protected by the police. After this incident so many flowers were placed on the British monument that they were prohibited from the beginning of November.

In a broadcast on the 25th August, 1940, the Brussels radio took upon itself to lecture Belgian women, and said: 'During the last few days certain eccentric women have been seen in the streets rigged out with badges, military buttons, or some would-be military headgear . . . mostly British. These badges and head-dresses are in doubtful taste. . . .'

At the same time Belgian common sense reasserted itself, and the lively critical sense of Belgians was reawakened by the gross lies and incredible falsehoods propagated by the Germans.

At the end of August, 1940, the German military court sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment two inhabitants of Brussels for having accused the Germans of being responsible for the bombing of the 15th August, during which several buildings of the 'rue Antoine Dansaert' had been destroyed. German propaganda had conducted an elaborate campaign both in the press and by radio, in order to induce the Belgians to turn their anger against the British: but everyone in Brussels wondered why the German anti-aircraft guns had been silent that night. When they pronounced the sentence the Germans declared: 'It is extremely regrettable that lack of judgment leads certain people to act in this manner. It is to be hoped that the population will understand the harm it causes itself by spreading rumours which cannot be verified, and that this sentence will act as a warning.' This was tantamount to confessing that methods of conciliation had been abandoned, that the Belgians were the same as they were when the Governor-General, von Bissing, described them in 1915 as being 'beyond redemption', and that henceforth the Prussian grip would make itself felt.

The charm of collaboration was broken. Shortly afterwards acts of sabotage became more and more frequent: telephone wires were cut, German ammunition dumps burst mysteriously into flame.

The revolt of the Belgian people against the Nazi oppressor had begun.

CHAPTER 4

The King

SINCE the 28th May, 1940, King Leopold III, King of the Belgians has been a prisoner in the castle of Laeken. At the beginning of his captivity his attitude was the subject of various conjectures on the part of Belgians who were not living in occupied territory. The confusion which was rife in the minds of all, together with the lack of information on the situation in the country, made it impossible for international opinion to pronounce an authoritative judgment on what was going on in Belgium.

However, items of news gradually began to reach foreign countries, and by July, 1940, the opinion expressed by all the eminent legal writers, Albert Deveze, Minister of State; M. Hayot de Termicourt, Attorney-General of the Supreme Court of Appeal; and M. Pholien, a former Minister, was known to many Belgians and helped to throw what was for many of us, a cheering light on the constitutional aspect of the surrender. This legal pronouncement, dating from the 1st June, 1940, states clearly that in his capacity as Head of the Army the King was within his rights in signing the capitulation. He was also within his rights in allowing himself to be taken prisoner along with his fellow soldiers. But the legal pronouncement specifies clearly and frankly that this fact in no way changed the nature and the authority of the Government which still is the country's only legal Government. No government established in Brussels under foreign occupation can possess this authority.¹ It was also learnt that on the 2nd June, 1940, Monseigneur Van Roey, Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, had ordered to be read in all Belgian churches a pastoral letter in which he said that the King had given him permission to state in his name, that he had committed no act of a political nature, that he had signed neither pact nor treaty even of a military nature with the enemy. Thus he had in no way infringed the constitution of the Belgian people. At the order of M. P. Ryckmans, the Governor-General of the Congo, these documents were published in all the newspapers there and did a tremendous amount towards enlightening the opinion of Belgian colonials, who like ourselves, had had no news other than vague rumours for two months.

Much information received shows that from the beginning the attitude of the King, whereby he considered himself to be a prisoner

¹ It is impossible to praise too highly the attitude of these lawyers who by their firmness were able three days after the capitulation to clear up all misunderstandings over the question of the political decisions.



King Leopold and his three children

A photograph taken in the Garden of his Palace in Laeken after the confirmation of his daughter Princess Josephine Charlotte, June, 1941.



Cardinal Van Roey.

of war and refused to enter into any political negotiations with the Germans, was approved by the great majority of the population. They demonstrated their loyalty in various ways: by laying wreaths of flowers in front of his palace at Laeken and by wearing badges in the form of an 'L'. But it soon became evident that in Belgium opinion was not unanimous as far as the political significance of the King's decision was concerned. Some thought that if his presence in Belgium inspired resistance, it would have the same effect abroad. The attitude of the Queen of the Netherlands who tried to infuse courage into her oppressed subjects created a strong impression in Belgium. Other people thought that Belgium's international prestige would be more firmly upheld if her King had been in a free country—where he would have won the respect of the whole world as the champion of his unfortunate people. But everyone realized that his decision to share the fate of his soldiers had a great moral and sentimental value. In this spontaneous loyalty of the Belgian people there existed, however, something which could not fail to arouse astonishment: the Flemish nationalists and the Rexists were the first to flaunt their obedience and devotion to the King. But after a few weeks the patriots soon saw what foul scheming lay hidden under the cloak of loyalty. What they really desired was that the King should break through his reserve, adapt himself to the German victories, and come to terms with the occupation authorities for the purpose of establishing a Government in Brussels. But the disdainful silence with which they were greeted at the Palace soon forced them into a political attitude full of contradictions. As a result, the Flemish-nationalists gave their entire allegiance to the Nazi cause: their leader, Staf de Clercq, declared that he was no longer in favour of the monarchy, but wanted to create a Flemish Republic under protection of the Third Reich. The Rexists, however, continued to implore the King to put an end to this opposition which they considered hopeless and without justification.

But in spite of the help given them by De Man in *Le Travail*, and M. Robert Poulet in the *Nouveau Journal*, the King was not prepared to reply to their far from disinterested entreaties. Secret newspapers such as *La Libre Belgique* boldly denounced the base intrigues carried out by the puppets of the enemy and stated that they had full confidence in the King's ability to adhere rigorously to his role of prisoner of war.

The King's determination, repeated time and time again, to stick firmly to his present course of action, helped in a very large measure to cripple the enemy's machinations which were aimed at dividing Belgian public opinion.

It is certain that in the present circumstances, and as long as the King maintains his attitude as a prisoner of war, his presence in Belgium constitutes a very serious obstacle for the Germans, whose aim it is to set up a government of Quislings, which would assume the responsibility of a policy of collaboration with Germany.

Belgian ministers in England paid homage to the position upheld by the King since the 28th May, 1940. First M. de Vleeschauwer in September, 1940, M. Gutt in October, 1940, and after their arrival in England, M. Pierlot, Prime Minister, and M. Spaak, Minister for Foreign Affairs, did the same: for example, in their speeches of the 10th May, 1941, and the 21st July, 1941.

Moreover, this opinion was expressed publicly by Mr. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, when he spoke in the name of the British Government at the Mansion House, London, on the 29th May, 1941. He paid tribute to the Belgian people, faithfully fighting at the side of Great Britain; he said: 'The Belgians are also in our thoughts grouped round King Leopold, who maintains with unbroken dignity his position as a prisoner of war.' 'This people have resuscitated the spirit of resistance which had already inspired the whole Belgian nation during a previous ordeal.'

It was the Germans themselves who indirectly admitted to what extent the attitude firmly upheld by Leopold was contrary to the interests of their policy. On the 9th November, 1941, a communique issued by the Administrative Services of the Army prohibited any public demonstration for the 15th November, on the occasion of King Leopold's patronymic day. This communique simply stated very curtly: 'Since the King regards himself as a prisoner of war he will certainly not wish for any political demonstration in his honour.' M. Pierlot, speaking on the London radio, made the following comments on this arbitrary decision taken by Belgium's oppressors: 'The Belgians are not allowed to show their affection for the Monarchy and for its present representative. It is forbidden to pay homage to the King, a prisoner of war in his own country. And we are not surprised at this. Germany cannot allow public demonstrations which show that the Belgian people are in firm agreement with the attitude adopted by their King, the logic of which is clear to see. Nothing could be clearer proof of the fact that Belgium, although temporarily under enemy control, is not yet conquered; that a state of war still exists between Belgium and Germany, and that it will continue to exist until the country is once more free and independent, under her free King.'

Now the Germans themselves have understood the situation,

and make no secret of it. Although at the beginning of the occupation they tried to gain their ends by the use of trickery and ingenious compromise, the decree of the German Commander in Belgium shows that they are now reverting to their natural characteristics, and to essentially German methods. With incredible clumsiness they announce that the attachment of the Belgian people to their institutions, their independence, their constitutional liberties, and to the King, the guardian of these things, is incompatible with submission to and collaboration with foreign domination, whatever the different opinions concerning the political consequences of his attitude may be.

These public incidents and declarations are a great consolation to the Belgian people. Their courage is strengthened, and their determination to stand up to their ordeals increases, when they are assured that the honour of the Head of the State is safe.

CHAPTER 5

German Administration in Belgium

CAREFUL to remember the lessons learnt during the occupation of Belgian territory, 1914-18, the Germans hastened to get rid of those whose presence during the last occupation had caused them embarrassment—ministers plenipotentiary representing certain foreign countries in Belgium. They remembered all the difficulties which the courageous intervention of Mr. Brand Whitlock, United States Minister, and Mr. de Villerlobar, Spanish Minister, had caused them during the years 1914-18. They knew how much the testimony of neutral diplomats had gone against them in certain matters such as the execution of Miss Cavell in 1915. It was essential that such an experience should not be allowed to recur, and that these unwelcome intruders should be removed as soon as possible to leave the field free for the occupation authorities. Thus as early as August, 1940, the foreign ministers were asked to leave the capital. From then onwards the policy of isolating the oppressed Belgian people was systematically pursued; first the American consulates throughout Belgium were closed, and recently the Swiss consulates were closed down in a certain number of towns.

On the 17th July, 1940, the German High Command in Belgium and Northern France issued a decree concerning public authority in Belgium which was intended to 'prevent members of the former Pierlot Government, and former members of Parliament who had fled abroad from exercising their prerogatives and creating trouble in Belgium'. In article 1 of this decree it was stated, 'Former members of the Pierlot Government, who are at the present moment abroad, are not allowed to return to Belgium.' The object of this measure was not to prevent members of the Pierlot Government coming back to Belgium. Actually the decree was issued a month after the French capitulation and the members of the Pierlot Government were still in France. The real aim of the Germans was to sow the seeds of doubt in the minds of Belgians, to discourage them and to alienate their sympathies from the legal Government of the country by hinting that the latter had already decided to return to the country and that it was only the will of the Germans which prevented them from doing so.

The experience of 1914 had shown, and moreover events which followed the invasion were immediate proof, that in the event of war the Belgian Government would probably have to leave the

capital of the country. But it was of vital importance that the administration should remain in Belgian hands in order to maintain the morale and strengthen the resistance of the population in occupied regions. Thus it was advisable to plan ahead who, in this eventuality, would take charge of the day-to-day administration of the country's internal affairs. A law passed by the two Chambers on the day of the German invasion (the 10th May, 1940), regulated the administrative power in the hands of the Government.

In the absence of the Government the administration of the day-to-day affairs of the State was to be handed over to the Secretaries-General¹ of the Ministries. It was of course clearly understood that this authority was only to be exercised within the limits set out by Belgian Constitutional laws, and that there could be no question of infringing these laws. The power handed over to the Secretaries-General could therefore be neither legislative nor judiciary.

No doubts in connection with this existed in the minds of the deputies who had passed the law, nor in those of members of the Government, nor even in those of the Secretaries-General who were holding office on the 10th May, 1940, and who were all experienced officials. But the Germans were not slow to realize the benefits they could reap from the situation created by this law. Almost immediately they began to dismiss the Secretaries-General on various pretexts and to replace them by individuals in their pay or by men without distinction or character.

In two broadcast addresses from London M. Pierlot, the Prime Minister (see appendix one), defined in perfectly clear terms the powers held by the legal government established in London, and those allocated to the Secretaries-General holding office on the 10th May, 1940. The Prime Minister also stated in no uncertain terms that the Belgian Government does not recognize any decision taken, any appointment made, or any

¹ In Belgian ministries, the *Secretaries-General* are civil servants of the highest grade. Each ministerial department has only one Secretary-General; he takes orders directly from the Minister and is head of the staff. By the law of the 10th May, 1940, certain Secretaries-General were compelled to stay in Brussels and others allowed to accompany the Government. M. Langenhove, Secretary-General to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and M. Gorlia, Secretary-General to the Ministry of Colonies, are in London. The others went back to Brussels after the Franco-German armistice, and were dismissed by the Germans. Thus in July, 1940, only eight Secretaries-General were officiating in Brussels: these were the Secretaries-General of the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministries of Finance, Labour, Education, and the Ministry of Justice. The most important functions from the political point of view were gradually transferred to the Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Interior—the German-appointed traitor, Romsée.

decrees passed by the Secretaries-General nominated by the occupation authorities. Moreover the Belgian population shows unmistakable hostility and biting scorn for these unscrupulous individuals.

Amongst the Secretaries-General greatest authority was naturally given to the least scrupulous among them. One of the most notorious is Mr. Romsée, a Flemish-nationalist deputy, more recently appointed by the Nazis Governor of the province of Limbourg and Secretary-General to the Home Office. He is outstanding among the collaborators, and does not shrink from the basest tasks. Very extensive powers were therefore allocated to him. Not only does he manage the internal administration of the country but it is he who grants passports, controls the constabulary, appoints teachers, and supervises prices. Another collaborator, no less sinister if less important, is Mr. Victor Leemans, a retired school teacher, nominated to his post by the Nazis, and an 'expert' in economic matters. It was he who was ordered by his masters to introduce national-socialist methods into the economic organization of Belgium. Outstanding only in mediocrity and incompetence he merely succeeded in creating appalling chaos.

The measures taken by the Germans in administrative matters had some very curious features. One is at once struck by the fact that the greater part of the decrees issued by the German authorities date from the beginning of the occupation, and in particular from the months of May, June, and July. Since that time new decrees have become much less frequent, and are mostly amendments of the first decrees. The explanation is that these decrees were drawn up before the invasion of Belgium, plans for which had been made a long time in advance. This is indubitably proved by the German decree of the 18th May, 1940, ordering *Reichskredit Kassenscheine*¹ to be circulated in occupied territory. In fact this decree even refers to a German decree of the 3rd May, 1940 (and therefore dated seven days before the invasion of Belgium) which extends to Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France, measures carried out in Denmark and Norway for feeding the occupation troops, and also measures dealing with the means of payment.

Another feature of the German decrees which are written in the most appalling French, is that they are perpetually liable to revision: indeed, some of them have been revised on at least ten occasions.

On the other hand the penalties inflicted when these decrees

¹ Occupation Marks.

are not obeyed are utterly vague and characteristic of the Germans' curious conception of Justice. Usually it is merely stated that military tribunals will inflict penalties *ad hoc*—that is to say, they can vary from a fine of fifty francs to twenty years' hard labour! Another juridical paradox is found in the decree of the 7th June, 1940, which gives German town *majors* (military commanders) the right to inflict periods of imprisonment up to six weeks, and also fines amounting to 30,000 marks. The right of appeal is provided for the offender, but the appeal can only be made to the same town major, who has inflicted the punishment. It would be very difficult to imagine a better means of turning a legal conception to financial profit. The military commanders have then the right to revoke their own decisions as far as fines are concerned—on condition, of course, that they receive an honest reward! This is what actually happens, and all the people who have escaped from occupied Belgium tell the same story: you can buy anything you want under the German administrative system. At the same time the officials of the administrative services of the army have claimed for themselves all the privileges due to 'Herrenvolk': in fact a decree of June, 1940, announced that Belgians were not allowed to hunt, and stated categorically that this sport was reserved purely for German military officials.

The German decrees are furthermore drawn up in such a manner as to enable those who put them into effect to make use of every form of pressure and blackmail. A few characteristic examples may be quoted. The decree of the 20th May, 1940, concerning supplies liable to be requisitioned by the German Army was extended to cover 'all goods vitally necessary to the occupied country', which meant in actual fact anything the German Military Command happened to want. The decree obliging business concerns to continue working, claimed the right to establish regulations for any matters connected with 'the management of affairs and the administration of business concerns of any description throughout the occupied zones'. If the heads of concerns close their factories, provisional German directors are appointed with full powers and are even authorized to sell goods belonging to the concern. Decrees concerning public meetings are drawn up in similarly vague terms, and enacted with the same arbitrary interpretation. These decrees stipulate that although private meetings without any precise political aim are allowed, private meetings where politics are discussed can only be held with the permission of the *Kommandatur*. If these rules are not obeyed the offenders expose themselves to penalties *ad hoc*. Thus, according to this decree, if a Belgian invites a friend to his home

for a talk they are not allowed to discuss the war unless they have the permission of the *Kommandatur*, and have filled in a form giving details of their conversation. Should their conversation not conform with German rules they are liable to be punished *ad hoc*!

One of the most flagrant violations of the Constitution of the Belgian people and at the same time of the Hague Convention—which forbids the occupation authorities to change the laws of the occupied countries—is the decree of the 2nd December, 1940, which establishes in Belgium a new administrative penal law. This gives the Governors of the Provinces, District Commissioners, as well as Burgomasters, the right to impose fines on people who break the laws dealing with the rationing system. The administrative authorities can inflict fines up to 2,000,000 francs. The food situation in Belgium is such that it is impossible to live without having recourse to the 'black market', and the result is that the fines imposed in this connection are the most unpopular of all the measures taken by the Germans.

This decree constitutes a very serious violation of the principle of the division of authority which is the very foundation of the Belgian Constitution and which reserves for magistrates alone the right to judge their citizens. It is further proof of the sweeping political changes which the Germans, during the first months of the occupation, carried out with regard to the corporate bodies of the Belgian nation. Their aim was to implicate the magistracy, the constabulary, the police force in a general policy of collaboration with Germany, and to instil into the Belgian people a feeling of utter dejection and resignation which would lead them to abandon any effective form of resistance to the oppressor. If this policy was to succeed, the established authorities of the Belgian people—judges, officials, communal magistrates—would have to appear in the eyes of the Belgian people as the docile executants of the orders of the German masters.

What were the deep-rooted reasons of this administrative policy, so profoundly different from the policy practised during the years 1914-18? The Germans had realized that the policy of brutality and terrorism carried out during the previous occupation had resulted in complete failure. In spite of the action of a police force, much larger in 1914 than in 1940—due to the fact that the territories occupied by the Germans were less extensive, and to the fact that the main front was in the North of France—the Germans never succeeded in preventing Belgians publishing secret newspapers and distributing them even in the offices of the Governor-General, or from dividing out millions of francs among officials

who refused to work for the Germans; nor could they prevent tens of thousands of deported men from refusing to do any sort of manual labour for German war factories. In 1940, therefore, it was in the interests of the invader to create a general impression among the Belgian people 'that things were no longer as they had been in 1914-18, and that the Germans had changed'. Methods of force had not met with any success; this time the Germans decided to use guile and the crafty methods of entreaty and persuasion.

It must not be forgotten that, during the summer of 1940, the Germans still thought that the war would be over before the end of the year and that they would soon be able to enjoy the fruits of their lightning victories. It was, therefore, essential for them to obtain as quickly as possible a more or less voluntary collaboration with the conquered nations, so that the German victory should be considered as a *fait accompli*, and so that the economic machine of the conquered territories should be set once more in motion. This explains the policy of conciliation carried out by the German military authorities between May and September, 1940, in all the occupied territories: Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, occupied France. In every one of these countries the watchword of German administration adapted to local circumstances and national temperament was the same: 'The war is over for the occupied countries. Let everyone return to his work. Every man to his post.' This campaign of so-called appeasement was nowhere practised with such variety of means as in Belgium—press, radio, posters, instructions given to the troops. The Nazis knew that the Belgians regarded them as the sons of those who had ruined Dinant, Louvain, and Tamines; unlike the other countries occupied in 1940, Belgium had been invaded in 1914 and had learnt to know the Germans. It was essential, therefore, to create at all costs the impression that an entirely new situation now existed.

Every means were employed, some effective, others childish. A large number of prisoners were sent home. When the Germans disarmed young Belgian soldiers they used to say with that lack of tact in which they excelled: 'Go back to your mother.' The fact that the Belgian Army had laid down its arms, the presence of the King in the country, the existence in Brussels of the secretaries-general, whose duty it was to attend to day to day affairs—all this was exploited by the German controlled press and radio with a view to causing confusion among the people and to paralysing any attempt at organized resistance. Vague promises were made about the future of Belgium, and the Germans gave to understand

that in the event of a German victory Belgium would enjoy within the glorious framework of the New Order considerable administrative autonomy and relative political independence, 'just like Slovakia,' as was said in the German press. Every kind of emotion was exploited and no Allied Army was praised so much by the Germans for its courage as the Belgian Army; no King was so highly extolled by the enemy controlled press as King Leopold III.

In actual fact, what the occupation authorities wanted to create was an attitude of indifference with regard to the outcome of the struggle with England, an atmosphere of submission and resignation among the people, and one of collaboration in administrative and business circles.

Those were indeed gloomy days for Belgian patriots and more than once they must have shuddered at the thought of what a German victory would mean in its moral effect.

But soon it was noticed that things were not going as well as the Germans had anticipated. Difficulties arose with high officials at the Home Office who did not want to appoint as Burgomasters candidates proposed to them by General Raeder's administration. Finally, General Raeder had to relieve them of their duties in order to obtain the appointments he desired. It was the traitor Romsée, appointed General-Secretary to the Home Office, who agreed to carry out this sinister task.

But gradually opposition, at first underground, but which every week grew more determined, was organized in certain administrative circles. German officials being on the whole mediocre and extraordinarily incompetent, created by their orders a state of chaos which Belgian subordinate departments did their utmost to intensify. Belgian officials demanded explanations, fuller instructions, pointed out exceptions, gradually created a deluge of papers and circulars in which everybody floundered. The Germans, with their love of printed instructions, were taken in by these artful schemes. From the autumn of 1940 the enemy controlled press began to complain about the attitude of certain officials who were in contact with the public, and stated that they did not show any willingness to 'understand the New Order'. Faced with this situation the Germans had to change their methods. They decided to act once and for all and to bring about a veritable *coup d'état* in administrative matters.

On the 7th March, 1941, a German decree was issued pompously stating that its aim was to 'prevent older men from holding administrative posts in Belgium'.


It lowered from 65 to 60 the age at which Government officials, judges, district commissioners, burgomasters, and aldermen, as

well as communal employees had to retire. In actual fact, the aim of the decree was to pension off almost all the Secretaries-General, more than 80 high officials, and nearly 3,000 burgomasters, aldermen, and communal secretaries. With an hypocrisy and a cynicism of which only the Germans are capable, it stipulated that this measure was necessary 'in order to find employment for the prisoners who had returned to their homes'. Nevertheless, it stated that officials who 'in spite of their age could prove that they had made themselves familiar with the chief historical events' could retain their posts. The 'chief historical events' were, of course, the interests of the occupation authorities. The posts which had been made vacant were naturally offered to individuals who had no ability for administrative affairs, and who belonged on the whole to either the Flemish National or Rexist parties. After a few months in a province like Western Flanders which consists of nearly 300 communes, there were only five burgomasters left who had not Flemish-national sympathies. Those whom the age-limit did not affect, and who showed no signs of bending to the German will, were dismissed and replaced without even having received a preliminary warning.

Naturally a situation of this nature was bound to create a state of acute disorder in administrative affairs. At the present moment, the internal affairs are being simultaneously administered by the German decrees and by the decisions taken by Belgian Secretaries-General. It frequently happens that a decision made by the Secretaries-General is completed by a German decree, and that an additional German decree is then issued to amend the decision of the Secretaries-General. The population is bewildered by this ever-increasing number of orders and decrees. The total number of the decrees issued by the Secretaries-General already fills more than 8,000 pages! New ministerial departments such as 'Prices and Salaries Commission', 'Food Control Department', have been created, and are run in the most inefficient manner. They soon embarked upon a struggle against the 'black market', which is extremely unpopular, for everyone realizes that it is impossible to obtain the theoretical rations and that without the 'black market' the town dwellers would starve; moreover, the only result of this campaign is to make the prices still higher and to increase the risks run by the middle-men.

As for the German administration it is even more incompetent. According to the evidence of a well-known Belgian manufacturer who has recently arrived in England there are far too many departments, and in each one the officials have no clear idea what their duties are. Nobody, not even the Germans, can find their way

among the intricacies of *Orts-Kommandantur*, *Feld-Kommandantur*, *Oberfeld-Kommandantur*, *Wirtschaft-Abteilung*, *Rüstung-Kommando*, *Wehrwirtschaft*, and *Rüstungstab*. The whole system is, moreover, riddled with corruption, and has filled decent people with disgust. It must be emphasized here that in Belgium the technical services of the Belgian administrative system were excellent, and that some of them such as the Postal and Telegraph Services, Registry Offices, enjoyed a considerable reputation on the Continent. In spite of that they did not escape the criticisms of a public very jealous of its rights and liberties; often the parliamentary galleries and the precincts of the communal councils rang with bitter complaints against the errors or the arbitrary decisions of the administrative system. To-day a mixed Government composed of Nazi propagandists, incompetent individuals appointed haphazardly, and of political adventurers directs by dictatorial methods the entire life of the nation. Within a few months it has created a state of chaos without precedent in the history of Belgium. Needless to say such a situation has made Belgians long more intensely than ever for free institutions and their benefits which they had enjoyed before the 10th May, 1940. They know now what a 'strong state' and a 'powerful administrative system' means. One may be assured that they have had enough of both of these to last them for the rest of their lives.



CHAPTER 6

Flemish Walloon Question and the Nazi Fifth Columnists—The Traitor Party

WHEN they occupied Belgium the Germans found ready waiting for them an organized traitor party, the origins of which can be traced to the war, 1914-18. This was the Flemish-National party. It was largely composed of young men who had not been involved in the previous War; it had nevertheless remained faithful to the memory and friendship of those who, at that period had come to terms with the occupying authorities, and who, for this reason, had been justly punished by Belgian law, or else had fled abroad. They all claimed as their authority Dr. Borms, a stubborn and narrow-minded old man who in 1918 had been condemned to death for having tried to split public opinion and who owed his life purely to the lenience of Belgian laws; their real leader was, however, Gustave de Clercq, a sort of country-pub 'fuhrer' with abrupt gestures and a flowing beard. A certain number of these doubtful characters had been arrested as soon as war broke out, on the morning of the 10th May. The others, among whom was Deputy Romsée, now Secretary-General to the Home Office, were present at the session of the Belgian Parliament (Chambre des Représentants) on the afternoon of the same day, and, trembling with fear, gave their vote of confidence in the Government.

Léon Degrelle, the Rexist agitator, had been placed under arrest: his pro-Fascist party had had a certain influence before the war, but at the 1939 elections had only acquired four seats out of 202. This motley band was transported to France where it had the undeserved luck to be freed on the occasion of the Franco-German armistice. These people then returned to Belgium spreading insulting rumours about the Allies and uttering threats against the patriots.

The Germans owed it to themselves to thank in the first place all their former servants. And indeed the Brussels radio announced that on the 4th August, 1940, General Baron von Falkenhausen, military governor of Belgium and the North of France, had received Dr. Borms to bestow on him the praise he deserved. The *Brüsseler Zeitung*, a German paper appearing in Brussels, thanks to commandeered machines belonging to the former daily paper *La Dernière Heure*, gave an account of this touching interview. Arrested in accordance with Belgian law in 1914 and 1940 Dr. Borms

was indeed worthy of 'the warmest praise'. General von Falkenhausen 'shook him by the hand as a sign of gratitude for the services he had rendered to Flanders and civilization'. The paper did not mention the fact that the General Baron's handshake must have seemed to Dr. Borms poor compensation for twenty years of betrayal and plotting against the Fatherland, for he claimed a large sum from the Belgian Government as a compensation for the suffering and grievances he had had to bear during his dismal career.

The German decree of the 6th September, 1940, created a 'reparations commission which had all the characteristics of an independent Belgian institution' under the presidency of Dr. Borms; its aim was to grant compensation to traitors penalized by the Belgian State as the result of the 1914-18 occupation. The members of this commission were to hold honorary posts but considerable funds were placed at their disposal in order to compensate the 'victims'. Of course, the first thing that these 'martyrs of Flanders' did was to make personal use of the State's funds. The commission naturally behaved particularly generously towards its President. As compensation for damages incurred between 1919 and September, 1940, Borms was granted an initial indemnity of 100,000 francs, and another indemnity of 1,000,000 francs (a total of nearly £9,000). Furthermore it was decided to grant him, as from the 1st September, 1940, a monthly pension of 5,000 francs in his capacity as a former member of the teaching profession. Among the other beneficiaries we find the traitors Adelfous Henderickse (450,000 francs), K. Fossey (75,000 francs), Bonemans (400,000 francs), A. Van Parys' (120,000 francs), and Rousseau (100,000 francs). The cheques which were handed to them bore the words 'for rehabilitation'. This was the method invented by the Germans to remunerate their spies at the expense of the Belgian State.

The policy of penetration and division practised by the German authorities in Flemish intellectual circles turned out from the beginning to be tenacious and insidious, and was obviously based on profound knowledge of the different trends of opinion which prevailed there. Here especially one could appreciate to the full the treachery of the policy inaugurated twenty-five years previously by the Governor-General Baron von Bissing: here, too, the policy of the 'links' established under the cloak of secrecy appeared in its most sinister light. The activists who had compromised themselves during the previous occupation were sentenced by default by Belgian tribunals: but most of them had fled to Germany. There they had found comfortable situations in Universities, Ministries,

and on newspaper staffs: for twenty years many German professors studied in collaboration with them the development of art and literature in Flanders. Thus as soon as Belgium was invaded they were ready to launch a great offensive in Flemish artistic circles. And they set about this in a very skilful manner. Instead of indulging in heavy propaganda for national-socialist art, the German authorities encouraged and made suggestions concerning the holding of a whole series of anniversaries and celebrations in honour of the great men of Flanders. The tercentenary of the death of Rubens at Antwerp was celebrated by a performance of Peter Benoit's 'Rubens' Cantata' given in the chief towns of Flanders: Van Artevelde was commemorated at Ghent, Rodenbach at Bruges, Peter Benoit at Harlebeke, and Jean Van Eyck at Maesyck and Hasselt.

The Germans posed everywhere as admirers and protectors of Flemish culture, and the ceremonies were performed in the presence of a certain number of 'representatives of the German Army'. Rubens and Van Eyck were no longer considered as Flemish painters, but rather as 'famous Teutons'. They even advertised a Rubens exhibition which took place in Moscow in November, 1940! But the Germans, who knew that the living would be at least as useful to their purpose as the dead, did not stop at these somewhat platonic demonstrations. To flatter the vanity and pride of certain artists they encouraged and gave the greatest publicity to demonstrations held in their honour. Celebrations were held for the traitor Verhulst (who had come back from Germany in the enemy's service wagons!) and who was presented with the Rembrandt prize 'intended to bring the Germanic peoples closer together'; also, before a great gathering of German University professors, demonstrations were given in honour of the 70th anniversary of the writer Styn Streuvels, who was presented with a diploma, 'docteur honoris causa' of Munster University, and a telegram of congratulations from Dr. Goebbels as the supreme reward. The priest and writer Cyriel Verschaeve was put at the head of the Flemish Cultural Committee, and was granted extensive powers in all questions dealing with Flemish education, and with Flemish art associations.

Visits to Germany were organized for Flemish artists. The writer, Felix Timmermans gave a lecture in Berlin; the painter Servaes, who had denounced over the wireless French and Jewish influence on painting, had the honour of shaking hands with Dr. Goebbels; the actor J. Diels gave a lecture at Cologne to celebrate Flemo-German cultural relationships. Everywhere German military commanders claimed to follow the most exacting artistic standards.

A reunion was organized of Flemish and German poets, and they presided over it with great authority. It is true that any individual who had had an average education, but who collaborated with the enemy was immediately hailed as an artist or a great poet. At this reunion they laid before the Belgian authorities a plan concerning an exchange of Flemish and German teachers. Flemish artists were, they said, called upon to play a great part in what they called the 'German Renaissance'. In actual fact they merely intended to use a few prebendaries or naïve dreamers who had had no political education or convictions, and who were bewildered by events, to help them to disguise the regime of oppression which they were preparing with the shining cloak of art and the flowers of poetry.

But unfortunately for them the hard realities of war forced the German authorities to pursue a less high-faluting policy. As the months passed, the place which the radio and the German controlled newspapers were to have devoted to 'artistic' demonstrations had to be given up to communiques dealing with food control, unemployment relief, propaganda to induce workers to go to Germany, and uneasy commentaries on the Russian campaign. But it is useless to deny that a certain number of Flemish artists allowed themselves to be outwitted! The fact, however, that they had joined forces with the Germans—and when you know the type of men they were you know how long their allegiance was likely to last—created no stir whatsoever among the mass of the Flemish people or among the intellectual youth of the country. Indeed, it can be said that at the Flemish University of Ghent never, since the University came into existence, have there been, among the students, so many supporters of Belgian unity and independence.

To complete their division of Belgium from the artistic point of view, the Germans encouraged an autonomist movement among Walloon intellectuals. The Germans even went as far as organizing Walloon art exhibitions at Dusseldorf. The Burgomaster of this town pompously announced that the New Germany was taking Walloon art under its protection. But all this failed lamentably. It was indeed difficult to promise a French-speaking people an important place in the 'German Renaissance'.

The Flemish-nationalist party soon felt the need to imitate Nazi methods. Flemish militia were organized and Deputy Tollenaere, an illiterate sort of fellow whose various yappings had considerably amused the liberal deputies who had the misfortune to sit next to him in the Belgian Parliament, proclaimed himself their general and chief. As for Léon Degrelle, he came back to Belgium accompanied by the litterateur Pierre Daye, and by a few



Staf De Clercq.



Leon Degrelle



Henri De Man, leader of *The Union of Manual and Intellectual Workers*

Below Leon Degrelle (3rd from left) and his legionaries parade before leaving for Russia



other worthless tub-thumpers who had rallied to his side in France. He immediately set about republishing his paper, *Le Pays Réel*, and specialized in idyllic descriptions of the benefits of the New Order.

In its broadcast of the 15th July, 1940, Brussels radio announced as the news item for the day: 'To-morrow we will witness the attempts made by politicians of the old regime to rally round the national-socialist regime. We would like to give them this piece of disinterested advice: "Adopt a trade, that of a navvy, for instance, and earn your bread by the sweat of your brow. . . . Thus you will be forgotten, perhaps forgiven."'

The Nazis who draw up the commentaries of Radio Brussels had probably imagined that Belgian politicians were of the same calibre as their own, because as far as politicians of the old regime were concerned, in the Belgian traditional parties—Catholics, Liberals, Socialists—only one representative out of the 202 deputies and the 165 senators rallied to the national-socialist cause, and he was an ex-professor of the University of Frankfurt. This man was the socialist senator De Man, former Finance Minister, and the author of the *Plan du Travail*. He had no hesitation in publishing in the name of the Belgian workers' party a manifesto of which the following is the most astounding passage:

'Put yourselves in the foremost ranks of those who are fighting against poverty and demoralization and for the resumption of work and the return to a normal existence. But do not imagine that you must resist the occupation authorities; accept the *fait accompli* of their victory and try to gain experience from it so as to make it a basis for a new social progress. . . . By deciding to fight their way to victory the democratic governments have accepted in advance the verdict of war.' Thus did De Man propound the thesis of resignation to the German victory and collaboration with the occupation authorities.

Among Belgian Fifth Columnists he stands out as an intelligent national-socialist and an accomplished traitor. He has not the shrewd knavery of Laval, but the work he has just published in Brussels after the events of 1940 shows him to be a theorist of the art of foul play.

Around these chief characters were gathered a few dozen journalists who had specialized in libel, blackmail, or begging, of the Colin and Horace Vanoffel type. With them were also to be found a few men such as M. Robert Poulet, who were carried away by their love of doctrines based on authority and strength.

All these represent only a small group of men, at variance with each other, hating each other, and who had won the attention of

not more than 2 to 3 per cent of the Belgian people. This is convincingly proved by the very small number of recruits to the Flemish-national and Rexist militia; by the thin audiences which attend the meetings they organize, by the limited circulation which their newspapers enjoy, by the frightened, apprehensive tone they adopt in these papers when they refer to the systematic hostility to which they are constantly exposed. These traitors are divided one against the other, and the Press of the occupied territory makes no attempt to hide this. The following gloomy statement can be found in an article of the Brussels paper *Le Soir* of the 4th January, 1942 :—

‘Even in New Order circles, everything is far from being perfect. Apart from a disinterested minority who put all their energies into their work, we have before us the far from encouraging spectacle of personal quarrels and ambitions.’

The traitors know that they are scorned by the public, they know that their life is in danger the moment it loses the protection of German bayonets: having banked rather prematurely on a German victory their discomfiture increases from day to day while still more formidable threats and dangers seem to lie ahead.

The true situation is clearly shown by the fact that at the end of the year 1941 the total strength of the Rexist party was estimated at 2,000 and that of the Flemish-nationalist party at 5,000 members, including women and children. Attempts made against their lives were frequent: even during these last few weeks, the Rexist Gérard was killed at Tournai, as well as two German policemen; the Rexist Oedekerke was murdered at Brussels, and a bomb was placed in the house of M. Mester, a socialist and follower of De Man. Since the lives of the traitors were constantly in danger General von Falkenhausen was obliged to issue the following decree in order to protect them: ‘Henceforth any person committing acts of violence of a political nature against those people who loyally collaborate with the occupation authorities, or against members of their family, or even against those who are in favour of partial collaboration, will be brought before a court martial; specified punishments, which include the death penalty, will be inflicted by this court.’ In addition severe sentences were passed on Belgians who had compiled black lists of traitors and collaborators.

This was tantamount to a public avowal on the part of the Nazis themselves that in Belgium the traitor party was a lamentable failure.

And in spite of the protective measures taken by the German authorities the traitors quake with fear, and some of them are

already trying to exculpate themselves. In an article of the *Nouveau Journal*, the organ of the Brussels pro-Fascist group written on the 20th October, 1941, a certain Beaudouin Draner protested against the 'campaign for incitement to murder' carried out by the Belgian broadcasts from London, and said: 'No doubt there are in Belgium, as elsewhere, real traitors. These no one will defend. But there are others whose only crime is not to show on certain important questions the views of the majority of their countrymen.' The next day the paper *Volk en Staat*, the organ of the Flemish-nationalist party who have definitely committed themselves to the defence of the New Order, accused the ministers Pierlot and Spaak of being responsible for the broadcasts from London and indignantly protested against 'this even stranger distinction between traitors', thus giving their pro-Fascist allies in Brussels a stern reminder that they must work together till the end, instead of trying to shirk their obligations.

There is no need to say how much these quarrels within the ranks of the traitors who have lost their faith in the future, and who are beginning to tremble for their lives console and rejoice the hearts of Belgian patriots.

Soon after the occupation, German political schemes, with the aim of splitting Belgian public opinion, were considerably widened in scope. On the 22nd July, 1940, the military authorities issued a decree forbidding from that time onwards open-air meetings, demonstrations, processions, and meetings of a political nature. Exceptions would not be granted without the permission of the *Ortskommandantur*. Non-political meetings had to be brought to the notice of the *Kommandantur* at least seven days before they were held. The formation of new societies was prohibited until further notice. In a long article published by General Raeder in the *Brüsseler Zeitung* of the 30th June, 1941, dealing with the activities of the German military administrative body, the latter justified his attitude to Belgian political associations in the following very frank and cynical manner: 'It is obvious that the parties who have shown hostility towards Germany can no longer continue their activities. But we see no reason for forbidding meetings held by parties who have been favourable to us.' And this was indeed the spirit behind the enforcement of the decree of the 22nd July: namely that only meetings organized by Flemish-nationals and Rexists were to be allowed.

No less curious are the terms in which General Raeder defined the policy of the German administration with regard to the Flemish and Walloon people. 'The administrative service of the army took upon itself to redress the balance, and to give to the Flemish

their legal dues. This attitude has been erroneously interpreted as implying a preference for the Flemish, but in reality it was only a very justifiable peace measure.'

Let us see now how these justifiable peace measures worked out in practice. Let us take as an instance the treatment meted out to Belgian prisoners in Germany.

From the very beginning of their captivity the camp authorities segregated the Flemish and Walloon soldiers. From the month of October, 1940, only Flemish prisoners were sent back to Belgium. The first to go were those of purely Flemish origin, and then those whose names had a Germanic ring. They all had to be able to speak Flemish, and all had to have received from Belgium at least two letters written in Flemish. Can one imagine a more base and hateful scheme for dividing comrades in arms, for sewing the seeds of envy and suspicion among families, for instilling jealousy and hatred into the hearts of mothers and wives anxiously awaiting during long weary months, the return of their beloved prisoners?

But the reaction was swift to follow and showed with what courage and dignity the Flemish people could face adversity. Many Flemings, non-commissioned officers and privates, refused to undergo a cross-examination by the German authorities, thus relinquishing, in order to stand by their Walloon comrades, a hope of returning to the fatherland. In certain camps, other Flemings were willing to help their jailors in their linguistic investigations . . . but only to pass off hundreds of Walloons as Flemings and to assist their departure. The announcement of these shameful measures was greeted in Belgium by an outburst of indignation and anger, the most stimulating effect of which was to make the Flemish masses loath the enemy's infamous behaviour with unequalled intensity and passion. Nevertheless, these measures were maintained by the Germans, and it is to be noted that at the end of 1941, more than 5,300 officers and more than 70,000 Belgian soldiers, belonging for the most part to the French-speaking parts of the country, were still in German prisons.

Another example of the dishonesty of the Germans in dealing with the Flemish-Walloon question appears in their policy in regard to education. By a decree Brussels was made a Flemish town, and more than three hundred supplementary Flemish classes in schools were brought into being, in spite of the disapproval of the children's parents. More than 6,000 children were taken away from French classes and obliged to learn Flemish. But German plans were still more ambitious: not only Brussels, but other towns such as Renaix, Menin, Enghien, were to be forced into becoming

entirely Flemish. All this was to be accomplished in a '10 year' plan, drawn up by a scatter-brained individual named Grammens.

During the same period all the extremist Flemish organizations received the order to amalgamate into one single group, the *Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond*, which would be the only one in Flanders authorized to indulge in political activity under the direction of its leader, Staf De Clercq. A near-military organization called *Zwarte Brigade* was placed under the orders of Commanding Officer Raymond Tollenaere. On the other hand all Walloon national-socialist units were forced to recognize Léon Degrelle as their leader, and he was forbidden to interfere in Flemish affairs. This new situation did not fail to give rise to a wave of intense discontent among the Rexists who saw themselves obliged to abandon Brussels to Flemish troops. But the linguistic question was not the only apple of discord thrown among the 'collaborateurs'. The Flemish Leader, Staf De Clercq, was opposed even to the idea of a Belgian state, which according to him would only be the artificial creation of artificial diplomacy. He declared himself in favour of the formation of one big Netherland country, which would be a vassal state of the Third Reich, incorporating all peoples of Netherland origin and language, from Friesland to the Somme. On the other hand, Léon Degrelle on several occasions expressed his strong predilection for the formation of a New State composed of Belgium and the northern part of France, which would involve the revival of the Burgundian Empire. And by no means the least amusing feature of these ventures was that while the Germans encouraged in Belgium political propaganda in favour of annexing the North of France, in Paris and Vichy Messrs. Abetz and de Brinon were elaborating plans for a new Western Europe in which the Walloon country would be annexed to France! Such is German policy: it seeks to dupe everybody—even the rogues who work for it.

But nobody took these grotesque incongruities seriously. Nobody paid any attention to the political mountebanks who tried to play at being 'Führers' of their village. In the meetings he held in Flemish towns Staf De Clercq used to make a practice of protesting against the pro-British sympathies of the Flemish people.

His paper, *Volk en Staat*, admitted on the 16th July, 1941, that his party was far from enjoying the sympathy of the majority of the people: on the other hand he referred to himself, somewhat presumptuously, as being the 'head of a clear-sighted and resolute minority' which had the right to speak in the name of the people because it comprised the 'superior sections' of the community.

While awaiting better times the 'clear-sighted and resolute minority' was incapable of organizing a single political meeting unless protected by Nazi bayonets; if the famous 'black brigade' tried to maintain order on its own accord, as happened at Brussels, it was immediately scattered by patriots. It was the same with the Rexists. Their official newspaper, *Le Pays Réel*, complained of the moderate success achieved by their party propaganda among the youth of the Walloon country, who remained pro-British and attached to the national institutions. Generally speaking the papers devoted to the new order admitted that the political minorities which hoped to undertake the government of the country had not been able to put these hopes into effect. They accused the constitutional parties of having resumed their activities secretly in spite of German orders. They noted the 'decline of political minorities'. A similar situation was found among the workers; the paper *Le Travail*, edited by the national-socialist Henri de Man, regretted the fact that Belgian youth retained its British sympathies, and remained resolutely hostile to national-socialist principles.

In view of this general failure the German authorities took advantage of the Russian campaign to introduce a radical change in the trend of their political propaganda. Since the boosting of the new order had not produced the expected results Dr. Goebbels' agents intoned hymns of praise in favour of the anti-Bolshevik crusade. The *Brüsseler Zeitung* carried ridicule to the point of reminding the Belgians that they belonged to the country of Godefroi de Bouillon who, so they said, had led the 'Teutons' into Palestine. The leaders of the extremist parties protected by the 'black guards' started an immense campaign throughout the entire Flemish country. This produced the most lamentable results. At Aerschot there were only twenty people present; at Beveren there were fifty, but a report made by the 'black guards' revealed that there were only twenty-five sympathizers; at Forest, Maria-kerke, Reyem, Hal, and Aelter the speakers addressed empty benches. At Werchten, Cruyshoutem, and Gysegheem the population showed itself so hostile that the meeting had to be interrupted. At Heyst-op-den-Berg, however, they managed to recruit two people. The *Brüsseler Zeitung* woefully admitted that even Flemish youth was slow to rally to the noble crusade. The same situation occurred in the Walloon country where the Rexist leader was manhandled by a group of workers.

Unable to arouse any enthusiasm, and feeling their position impaired, the extremist leaders decided to risk their own skins. Unsuccessful in their attempts to enlist others, they joined up themselves. Léon Degrelle decided to join the few hundred

wretched harum-scarums who made up the Walloon legion. On the Flemish side, the head of the 'black brigade', Raymond Tollenaere, Professor Daels, Commanding Officer François, the leaders Suys and Van Steenland brigade did likewise. But as they had no desire to set out alone they decided that all the members of their party should join the legion, and that they reserved the right to nominate those who should be sent to the front.

It may well be imagined how pleased the Belgian people were to see the last of these modern crusaders. They hoped they would meet on the Russian plains the fate they deserved, a well-placed Russian bullet. But they had no illusions on this point: this kind of adventurer distinguishes himself more easily in base political machinations than at the battle front. Here is a detail which gives some idea of the sympathy which the population meted out to the volunteers; men desiring to go to Russia are strictly forbidden to speak of this matter to their friends before being enrolled in the legion.

An article in the paper *Le Soir*, dated the 8th August, 1941, describes, with a wealth of detail, the departure from Brussels of Léon Degrelle and his legionaries. He is first of all pictured as 'calm and serious' in his spacious office on the 'Drève de Lorraine'. Speaking with the farcical grandiloquence which was one of the most curious features of this puppet, he declared: 'Before all else it is for Belgium's sake that we are leaving—that she may be present at this gathering of the robust forces of Europe, that we might win by dint of heroism the salvation, the integrity, the renaissance of our country.'

His imagination was not long in sweeping him far from the 'drève de Lorraine'. He spoke of the 'manly comradeship which will unite for ever all those who have fought for Belgium on the Albert Canal, the Lys, the Volga, and on the boundless steppes of Asia'. This long-winded bore could hardly be expected to leave Brussels without making a speech. The heroes assembled before their departure in the 'Palais des Beaux Arts'. Léon Degrelle spoke in the name of 'Walloon, French-speaking Teutons sprung from the same race as their brothers in the north and east.' He seemed to realize, however, that his attitude gave rise to only hatred and scorn, for he did not hesitate to confess that: 'We will go forth slandered, unrecognized, even hated. But what of it? On our return we will have saved the Fatherland, if necessary in spite of herself. And history will be grateful to us for having been stayed neither by stupidity nor by superior numbers.'

After this last melancholy reflection the unappreciated hero set off for the Gare du Nord.

Eye-witnesses of this departure drew a very amusing picture of it. Since the Germans had absolutely no confidence in the ability of the Belgian police to protect the 'volunteers' from the crowd, they ordered the *Feldgendarmarie* to guard the station.

When the volunteers arrived at the Place Rogier in black uniforms and escorted by German police a storm of hoots and catcalls arose from the crowds of people lining the pavements. Shouts came from all sides ironically wishing them a safe journey. 'Whatever you do don't come back again,' shouted the people of Brussels. Others added, 'If the Russians don't kill you, we'll do it ourselves.'

Thus the grand ceremonies which were to celebrate the departure of these wretched traitors drew to a close.

A fortnight later it was learnt that Léon Degrelle was in Random in a Polish camp, where he had the honour of sitting at the table with German officers 'although he has decided to live the simple life of a private' as was announced by Brussels radio on the 20th August, 1941.

When Professor Dach, one of the Flemish leaders, saw how the campaign was shaping, he hastily sought refuge in his native town of Ghent. He was more prudent than his colleague Tollenaere who, having made the mistake of getting too near the Russian lines, was killed. Since the beginning of winter 1941-42, hardly a week goes by but news from Russia announces the death of one or more 'legionnaires'. News of this sort makes the patriots wild with joy, in so far as the tasks they will have to accomplish when the moment of liberation comes will be lightened.

Yet another incident illustrates the sort of selfishness which prevails among this traitor rabble, as well as the cynicism of the German administration. A collection was organized among them, and among the Germans, with a view to finding winter clothes to be sent to the legionnaires in Russia. But the Germans granted their collaborators priority clothing stamps which enabled them to obtain extra clothes, whereas other Belgians had to do without. Their acts of so-called generosity and solidarity were thus carried out at the expense of a suffering community.

Thus is being enacted in occupied territory a comedy at once disgusting and ludicrous in which both inveterate traitors and puppets thirsting for fame, play a part. These only represent a very small and entirely discredited group of people whose activities are fruitless and who tremble at the idea of their masters ever leaving Belgium. The latter use them without scruple or shame to put into effect a policy which consists in splitting and

humbling the Belgian people, simply to serve their own military ends.

Patriots look on with contempt. Sometimes they are moved to anger, more often to laughter. But they are patient, because in their innermost hearts they are firmly resolved that this time when the final reckoning comes they will show no pity.

CHAPTER 7

The Economic Exploitation of Belgium—Sabotage

BELGIUM represented a rich booty for the Nazis. Although the country only covered an area of 72,000 square miles, and counted only $8\frac{1}{2}$ million inhabitants, yet from the point of view of foreign trade, it was fifth in the world. The value of her exports varied between £200,000,000 and £250,000,000 sterling: her gold holding, fortunately saved, reached nearly £200,000,000, and was the fourth in the world.

Such a noteworthy development in commerce and industry implied the existence of fairly large stocks; what is more important, reserves of food stocks and petrol had been accumulated between September, 1939, and May, 1940. The retreating Belgian army completely destroyed all petrol stores, but a fine booty still remained. The Germans, thanks to their perfected methods of scientific looting, succeeded in appropriating it with amazing speed. Their explanation to Belgian people, who were soon suffering from hunger and the lack of raw materials, was merely that it was the fault of the Pierlot Government which had not laid up sufficient reserves.

One of the first conditions for successfully carrying out a scheme for appropriating goods on the scale envisaged by the Germans in Belgium, was to possess a currency with a very high buying power. Nothing is simpler when one can fix the rate oneself in an arbitrary manner. As soon as they arrived in Belgium, on the 10th May, 1940, the Germans instituted the legal rate of the 'Reichskredit Kassenscheine' expressed in reichmarks on a basis of one-tenth of a reichmark per franc, that is 10 francs to a mark, whereas before the 10th May, 1940, the buying value of the different sorts of marks varied between 3 and 6.50 francs. But the Nazis were not satisfied with that, and on the 22nd July, 1940, the buying value of the 'occupation mark' was increased by 25 per cent and its value raised to 12.50 francs; these occupation marks had been printed several years ago, and in Belgium some circulated which had been printed on the 7th May, 1935.

The marks issued by the German military authorities were then gradually withdrawn from circulation and replaced by Belgian notes—the result being, of course, appalling inflation. The value of the notes in circulation which on the 10th May was 27,000 million francs, now exceeds 49,000 million francs or 400 million pounds, and continues to increase at the rate of an average 450

million francs per month. The movement is widespread and is characterized by a similar increase in the bank deposits, which rose from 11,496 million francs on the 1st December, 1939, to 14,481 millions on the 31st December, 1940: similarly the credits granted by the Belgian banks to the central administration rose from 3,913 million francs on the 31st December, 1939, to 17,614 millions a year later.

This rapid inflation in the currency and in the State's liabilities was accompanied by a similarly rapid increase in the short-term debt. In October, 1940, a loan of 3,000 million 4 per cent Five Year Bonds was issued by the Finance Department. In May, 1942, 2,200 million 3½ per cent Five Year Bonds were issued, and 2½ million between September and November, 1941. At the present moment a new loan of premium bonds amounting to 2,500 million francs is under consideration. Within a period of eighteen months a total of 14,600 million francs in loans have been issued.

Beside the state, the big cities are running into debt no less rapidly. Since 10th May, 1940, the towns have been quite unable to meet their liabilities, and continue to live on loans and advances.

In 1940 the deficit of the town of Brussels amounted to 400 million francs. Recently Ghent was obliged to raise a loan of 130 million francs, while Antwerp issued 265 million francs worth of cash vouchers. Nevertheless the Belgian central administration was obliged to give more than 3,200 million francs to the towns and provinces.

The annual report of the Banking Commission which controlled the Belgian banks stated in this connection: 'This increase in Bank Deposits does not in any way correspond to an increase in public savings. On the contrary, the explanation is rather to be found in the increased circulation of paper money, the reduction of stocks and the dwindling of economic activity. And during the year 1941 these tendencies had become more pronounced, because the total capital deposited as credit accounts was 17,529 million francs on the 30th June, 1941. Furthermore, this is confirmed by the fact that during the first month of 1941 the amount paid into the National Savings Bank was no more than 281 million francs against the 433 millions of the previous year. In every sphere inflation is on the increase and cannot be stopped; as the number of notes increases so does the number of small coins.'

The issue limit which had been raised to 3,000 millions on the 4th April, 1941, was cancelled on the 8th July of the same year;

the issue limit for the 2 franc, 1 franc, and 50 centimes pieces has also been cancelled.

The fear of a disastrous depreciation in the value of money naturally brought about a rise in stocks and shares on the Brussels Stock Exchange; whereas the monthly index was 72 on the 1st May, 1940, it reached 173 a year later; this represents a rise equal to 150 per cent. The Germans began by attributing this enormous increase to the benefits of the New Order, but when they saw that it threatened to involve a general rise in prices throughout Belgium—which was detrimental to their policy of buying cheaply in occupied territory, they tried to call a halt. An increase of 1 per cent and then 2 per cent was allowed with every stock exchange session, but these measures, from a practical point of view, produced no lasting effects. In these conditions the State Budget was bound to show an appalling deficit. The income for the financial year 1941 was only estimated at 13,000 million as against 11,000 million francs before the war, after the Income Tax on landed estate, taxes on drinks consumed in cafés, purchase tax on commercial transactions, the excise duties on tobacco, spirits and beer had been heavily increased. But ordinary expenditure rose to 17,000 million francs to which a further 4,000 million francs of extraordinary expenditure were added. The contributions towards the occupation expenses are estimated at a minimum of 15,000 million francs, thus making a total of 36,000 million francs, which meant a deficit of nearly 23,000 million francs per year. If one takes the national income as being 50,000 million francs, it may be noticed that the total expenditure of the State consumes 70 per cent of the national income, and it does so in a country which is no longer supporting an army on the Continent. The total sum of the State's debts has thus risen from 59,000 million francs before the 10th May, 1940, to approximately 85,000 millions at the present moment, exclusive of sums due as war damage which are estimated at more than 13,000 million; that makes a total of 98,000 million francs or a 60 per cent increase in 18 months.

Production and Requisitioning.

Besides this fantastic inflation of currency, the gradual requisitioning of supplies is relentlessly being carried out. This work is speeded up by the mass requisitioning practised by the Germans in order to supply their army of occupation, and especially by the consignments they send to Germany.

This requisitioning applies to every sphere. For instance it is pointed out that the Germans appropriate every month 8,000 cattle and 4,000 pigs, that in certain coalfields 70 per cent of the production is requisitioned, that the National Railway Association, in addition to the 30 million francs a month it pays as war indemnity, had also to submit to requisitioning to the amount of 104 millions during 1940. About 45,000 Belgian railway trucks have been taken by the Germans and sent as far as Italy and Roumania; they have also seized practically the whole of Belgium's stock of lorries. The textile industry has to hand over 80 per cent of its production to the occupation authorities, the tanning industry 75 per cent, the leather industry 84 per cent. In the Belgian part of Luxembourg most of the horses have been requisitioned by the Germans, and ploughing is now only possible with the help of oxen and cows.

Consequently social life has slowed down. Travelling is slow and difficult. Out of 4,200 railway engines belonging to the Belgian State Railways, there remain no more than 1,800, and, as might be expected, it was the newest and the most modern which the Germans seized. Out of 120,000 railway coaches 80,000 have disappeared, and it has become necessary to put into service, coaches which have not been in use for twenty years. Even the average speed of trains is one-third of what it was before May, 1940. As a result of lack of lubricants, axles screech horribly and get very hot. Frequent stops are caused by the poor state of engines and rolling stock. None of the country's 75,000 lorries are to be seen on the road, as they have been requisitioned by the enemy. Very few private cars can still be made use of, since petrol is practically unobtainable, and even doctors have the greatest difficulties in obtaining any. On the other hand, the Germans themselves operate a black market and sell army petrol at extortionate prices.

The situation in certain industries is so bad as a result of the decrease in production that a decree has had to be issued equalizing the expenses among various concerns. The main aim of this new system is to make firms who are still in possession of raw materials pay for the losses sustained by those who no longer possess any. It was first of all applied to the textile industry where the situation was the most serious.

In these matters as in so many others, it can readily be seen that the Germans have learnt much from the 1914-18 occupation. Their requisitioning has not been confined to agriculture and

industry, but has been extended to private individuals, as far as the handing over of non-ferrous metals such as copper and nickel are concerned. During the 1914-18 occupation a certain number of articles specified by the Germans had to be handed over, and military patrols used to be present to see that this was carried out. This method meant that a considerable number of soldiers had to be employed and gave Belgians the opportunity of practising all sorts of trickery. But now the Germans have recourse to more ingenious methods which involve a much easier system of control. Every Belgian citizen has to hand over a certain quantity of metal which has to be in proportion to his assessment for taxes paid during 1939. Should he not possess the quantity of metal for which he is taxable, he is allowed to buy it elsewhere, but should he refuse to hand over the metal, he is forced to pay a sum of money which exceeds by far the value of the metal. In spite of this ingenious system the press in occupied territory complains that Belgians belonging to the well-to-do classes prefer to pay heavy fines rather than hand over to the Germans metal which might be used in the manufacture of bullets intended for their friends and allies.

Side by side with requisitioning and spying the German policy aims at gradually gaining control over as large a number of industrial concerns in Belgium as possible. The movement began with insurance companies; German associations set up branches in occupied territory with the intention of taking over business negotiations formerly handled by English companies. As early as the month of December, 1940, sixteen German companies were already established in Belgium, and by July, 1941, this figure had risen to twenty-five. Activities by French and Dutch firms were gradually eliminated.

German infiltration into Belgian affairs is also being effected through the agency of German banks: important Belgian interests in Roumania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria have, under strong pressure, been handed over to the Germans. It seems to have been the *Dresdner Bank* which took the initiative; established in Brussels under the name of the '*Kontinental Bank*', it is using every means to worm its way into the country's affairs. This example is followed by the *Bank der Deutschen Arbeit*, which set up in Brussels a branch called *Westbank* as well as the *Commerzbank*.

In commercial matters the Germans naturally possess a powerful means of bringing pressure to bear—the Central Clearing House in Berlin. Negotiations for the exchange of goods between occupied Belgium and certain neutral countries

like Sweden are carried out by German officials. The same is true of exchanges of goods between Finland and Denmark. The continental market is thus controlled entirely by German economic experts, who consider only the interests of the Reich.

Totalitarian principles have been introduced into the economic structure. Agriculturists have been obliged under pressure to form a co-operative organization which regulates harvests, fixes prices, and determines the amount of supplies to be handed over and those to be left to the farmers.

Similarly in the organization of industry the Führer principle has been applied. Heads of industrial groups choose their assistant managers who in turn appoint their associates. They are responsible for the discipline, and see that the regulations are properly enforced: any breach is punishable by fines which amount in some cases to 700,000 francs (5,500 pounds). We can quote as an example a single industry, heavy engineering, which has no less than 96 Führers and assistant Führers. Salaries and prices are fixed by a committee of Inspectors which has developed in an extraordinary manner, and which is floundering in a sea of red tape.

Needless to say all these regulations, at once arbitrary and meddlesome, arouse the impatience and anger of the Belgians, whose spirit of initiative and whose attachment to liberty in the field of commerce constitute a real national tradition. Economic collaboration with Germany is being carried out within the limit imposed by the occupation authorities under threat of sanctions and the requisitioning of factories. Moreover, it is infinitely preferable to keep Belgian workers in Belgium, rather than see them obliged by famine to go to Germany. In occupied territory they can often work for the home market, and when they have to work for the occupation authorities their output is 50 per cent less than the output they would have to show in Germany under Nazi supervision. So the Germans use every means of forcing an increase in the output which they know is inadequate.

Supplementary ration stamps are given to workers employed in factories contributing to the German war effort. This measure, revolting in a country where ordinary rations are either insufficient or inadequate, aroused deep indignation among the mass of the workers, and compelled industrialists to make vigorous protests to the occupation authorities. Thus 'economic collaboration' is lacking in cordiality. The Brussels Municipality had to abandon the idea of organizing its annual fair in 1941, unwilling to be even indirectly involved in it. So the Germans themselves organized an exhibition which was boycotted by Belgian industrialists. Belgian participation in the fairs at

Leipzig and Cologne was reduced to a mere twenty firms and to a certain number of statistics pinned on the walls.

Certain concerns have refused to work for the Germans. In one firm two directors were immediately replaced by German superintendents: the staff remained solidly behind the directors. At the national arms' factory at Herstal, out of the 800 clerks employed before the war, only 27 worked for the new German director, while there were only 600 workmen on the books as against the 10,000 enrolled before the 10th May, 1940. In the banking world, opposition to the economic policy of the occupation authorities is led by the head of one of the most important banking establishments in the country, M. Galopin, director of the Belgian 'Societe Generale'. The frequent attacks made on him by the enemy-controlled press are very clear proof of this opposition.

Nevertheless, an important proportion of the production is requisitioned in the factories by the Germans. In the textile industry this percentage reaches 80 per cent. In the leather industry an order was received to reserve for the Germans 75 per cent of the prepared hides and 80 per cent of the manufactured leather articles.

But it is essential to qualify these figures in one important respect. The shortage of raw materials and coal has considerably limited activity in the industries. The output in the textile industry, in spite of the use made of waste and artificial fibre, is only 25 per cent of normal production. In the jute industry two out of three of the weavers and four out of five of the spinners have been dismissed through shortage of raw material. Half of the hemp spinners are without work. At the end of August, the reserve of cotton was only one-fifth of the amount existing at the beginning of the year. In the wollen industry only 55 per cent of the workers remained at their work.

A large scale economic espionage was organized at the same time as the requisitioning of products. The German authorities brought about the failure of all the attempts made by Belgian industrialists to protect themselves by means of clauses dealing with prices, against the increased expenses resulting from the augmentation of salaries and taxes. When the modification of prices had been granted, the German Orders Officer reserved the right to inquire into manufacturers' expenses and all necessary relevant documents had to be put at the disposal of this German office. Thus the manufacturing processes in Belgian factories are subject to systematic espionage.

As a result of passive resistance on the part of the miners the coal output continues to diminish; several companies have thus

found themselves in difficulties, and since the 15th August a subsidy of 30,000,000 francs per month has been granted; this was to be divided out amongst the pits. The resulting lack of coke has so seriously affected the metallurgical industry that the Germans have had to organize a halt in all the ironworks in occupied Belgium in turn. In fact, it may be said that as a general rule, Belgian industries manufacture very few finished products for the German army. Moreover, owners and workers conspire together to organize sabotage and reduce output, and as yet the Germans have invented no system of supervision capable of combatting this conspiracy among technicians. The Germans are far from satisfied with the situation. In an article devoted to Belgium the *Koelnische Zeitung* complains of the fact that industrial production in Belgium is completely inadequate.

Just as the New Order has succeeded in removing all the wine from France and all the wheat from Roumania, so the economic exploitation carried out by the Germans in Belgium has brought about such a state of things that the inhabitants of a country which in 1939 produced thirty million tons of coal suffered bitterly from the cold in the winter 1940-41, and even more so during the winter 1941-42. This last winter was so severe in Belgium that the snow reached a depth of two feet in the streets of Brussels. Railway and canal traffic was suspended. The coal shortage was so intense in the capital that even the owners of large houses used to sleep in the kitchen because they could not afford to heat two rooms in the house. 75 per cent of the Belgian coal production is sent to Germany, where it is used in the manufacture of ersatz petrol, or else it is sent to Italy, Sweden, and France. In Belgium, the domestic coal supply is completely non-existent and a strict rationing system has been introduced fixing the ration per month and per household at 200 kilogrammes. But these coal rations share the fate of the bread and potato ration; in actual fact, only one-quarter or one-fifth of their theoretical value can be obtained.

Nevertheless, coal production continues to diminish and the output of miners has dropped by anything between 15 per cent and 35 per cent according to the various pits. It is an established fact that miners work as little as possible; they practise ca'canny strikes on a large scale. To meet this the Germans have not hesitated to inaugurate a veritable system of forced labour in order to keep the miners at work. At the beginning of the German occupation, a large number of miners tried to find employment in other industries, either because they were inadequately fed or because they disliked doing a trade which was too useful to the Germans. The Germans then issued a decree forbidding miners to leave

the coalfields without giving three months' notice; this decree was in complete contradiction to Belgian legislation. At the end of last June 4,000 miners handed in their notice. Their contract was due to expire on the 1st October. Now a fresh German decree has just forbidden all miners who handed in their notice after the 17th June to leave their jobs before the end of March, 1942, that is to say not before nine months. To counteract this, supplementary rations and a 'fidelity prize' are offered to those who remain at work.

Food Rationing.

As for the rationing system it has a purely theoretical value. The rations actually distributed to the population do not correspond in the very least to the official scale and people very rarely find the commodities to which this system entitles them. As far as potatoes are concerned, according to official figures, a theoretical ration of 500 grammes or approximately one pound per day has been in force for several months, but in practice Belgian housewives can only get 30 to 100 grammes (one to three ounces) of potatoes per head per day in the market. The same applies to bread, where the 225 grammes allowed per day constitute nearly 50 per cent of the nutritive value of all allocated foodstuffs. As for the quality of the bread which is sold to the population—it is absolutely revolting. The bread contains about 30–50 per cent foreign matter; it is black and sticky; it is impossible to cut it with a knife and it can only be eaten in shapeless lumps. Needless to say it is completely indigestible and its nutritive value is practically non-existent. But for whole weeks there is none to be had, and the newspapers in Brussels frequently publish announcements advising the public not to get unduly upset on account of the total lack of flour. Usually the transport difficulties are blamed for these delays, but of course it is the Germans who by their extensive requisitioning have disorganized the distribution of commodities. This is particularly so in the case of butcher's meat. The requisitions of the German army as far as slaughtered livestock is concerned have been so heavy that they have absorbed the whole national output. Recently the Nazis commandeered 8 million pounds of raisins for their wounded at the Russian front.

The rations for December, 1941, provided a daily ration of one-quarter of an ounce of margarine, one-fifth of an ounce of butter, one and a half ounces of meat (including 20 per cent bones) or meat products, seven ounces of household bread, one-

third of an ounce of roasted coffee or half an ounce of coffee substitute, one-fifth of an ounce of rice, one-twelfth of an ounce of sugar, one-fifth of an ounce of dried vegetables, one-half of an ounce of syrup, fifteen ounces of potatoes, one pint of creamed milk, one-sixth of an ounce of oil. It can easily be seen that the population has kept alive mainly on bread, potatoes, and milk. People never receive the full amount of these theoretical rations. During the month of November, 1941, more than 100,000 people in the province of Brebant were unable to obtain a single potato.

In short, it may be said that the only article which is plentiful in the system of food-control in Belgium is the coupons. The products which they represent are to all intents and purposes almost non-existent.

The recent surveys made by Professors L. Brull, Hoet, Schoekaert, and by Doctors Mahaux, J. Slosse, and Sillevaerts have shown that as far as the adult population is concerned the rations now distributed in the larger cities provided no more than 900–1,000 calories per day while the requirements of a human being amount to 2,500 calories. There is no doubt, therefore, that if the present food situation continues it will inevitably cause a deterioration in the general state of health and will sap the physical resources of Belgian youth.

According to a report of Dr. Bigwood, Professor at the University of Brussels and Vice-Chairman of the Belgian Red Cross in London, based on most reliable documents received from occupied Belgium, the consequences of under-nourishment are most tragic in the case of adolescents between 14 and 18 years of age. In this category of persons who are still at the growing stage a loss of weight of 5 to 6 kilogrammes occurs in four months, whereas normally at that age there should be a considerable increase in weight. The younger children often faint at school and in the secondary schools examinations have to be spread out because the pupils are physically too weak and mentally too backward to prepare for them.

Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising to hear from foreigners travelling in Belgium that it is a common thing to see in the country a sight which was unknown for years—little children begging in the streets.

In the morning most of the children arrive at school with empty stomachs; week by week their faces grow paler, and they often faint in class and are subject to vomiting attacks. Not being able to withstand hunger, children belonging to villages and small towns often go at nightfall into neighbouring districts to steal potatoes and fruit. Occasionally, some of them, as they return with small sacks of peas or beans given to them

by kind-hearted peasants, are stopped by German constables who, in spite of their entreaties, confiscate their goods. In secondary schools and boarding schools it is becoming increasingly difficult to feed the pupils. When they run out of flour, potatoes, and dried vegetables they have to send the boarders back to their parents, first of all for two or three weeks, and then for good. As early as February, 1941, boarding schools in Antwerp and Brussels had to close down. They held out as long as they could by giving their boarders nothing but potatoes for every meal. But when supplies were exhausted there was nothing to be done but to send the children away. In the villages the schools are closed during the winter months owing to the coal shortage. Children who can find nothing to eat at home beg on the roads or steal from the Germans anything which has some commercial value. It is tragically evident that Belgian youth of every social class is undergoing a dreadful ordeal, and it is to be feared that they will feel the consequences of it for the rest of their lives.

Cold and hunger await the wretched Belgian people during a winter which will be even more difficult to endure than the winter of 1941. It is small wonder that under these terrible conditions underhand food traffic has become a normal procedure. During the month of November, 1941, alone, there were 7,000 cases of Belgians who were tried for obtaining food outside the rationing system.

In order to check this underhand business the Germans are obliged to guard the main approaches to the towns. They conduct surprise investigations on trains and local tram services; in post offices they confiscate parcels which they think might contain food. The food situation is so bad that two brave lawyers of the Brussels Bar, MM. Meysmans and Lemmens, argued before the tribunal that in occupied Belgium it was impossible to live without having recourse to the Black Market. For having upheld this thesis, which is moreover true, they were arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo.

Clear proof of a really serious shortage was the setting up of an agency in October, 1941, to see that the best possible use was made of food scraps. People who do not use, as they should, the food scraps in their own house, are obliged to give them up to other people who are in severe need of them.

Conditions in other spheres have been no better; during the summer of 1941 the number of shoes available for each commune was fixed at the rate of 4 per cent of the number of its inhabitants. When asking for a pair of shoes the applicant had to prove that those in his possession were worn; and any time after that he could

expect an inspector to visit his home and to verify the declaration he had made. As far as bicycle tyres were concerned, these could only be obtained on producing a licence. The number available for the population was fixed at 150 a month for Western Flanders (1 million inhabitants), 210 for Brabant (1,750,000 inhabitants), 125 for Eastern Flanders (1,000,000 inhabitants), 180 for Hainaut (1,500,000 inhabitants), 200 for Liège (1,000,000 inhabitants), 135 for Limburg (400,000 inhabitants), 175 for Namur (500,000 inhabitants), and 250 for Antwerp (1,200,000 inhabitants), that is to say 16,000 tyres per year for the total 2,000,000 bicycles owned by the Belgian people.

Similarly chemists can only obtain 30 per cent of the supplies sold in 1939. The rationing system extends even to babies' layettes and christening clothes. It was even attempted to apply totalitarian methods to the manufacture of cigarettes. The Germans wanted to impose a single make of cigarette made from a Bulgarian tobacco—an Axis product! This plan fell through owing to the opposition of the main tobacco concerns.

In the same way, only one sort of cake can be made in occupied Belgium, and the Germans have even gone so far as to count every hen. Their number has decreased from 12,000,000 to 3,000,000. Every inhabitant has the right to possess only one hen, whether it lays or not! The result was of course such a serious drop in the egg supply that eggs were reserved for children between the ages of one and three years and for women who are expecting or who have just had a child. The period during which young mothers can eat eggs begins four months before and finishes two months after the birth of the child. The Germans with their rigorous regulation-loving minds count the number of eggs a young Belgian mother can consume, while the Nazis are not ashamed to issue for themselves a triple ration card in an over-populated country where the people are dying of hunger as a result of their pillage.

The population often gives vent to its feelings concerning the non-distribution of these rationed goods in strikes and riots. At Antwerp women holding a board on which was written 'We want bread and potatoes' marched up to the town hall, where a delegation was to have handed in a petition. The demonstrators were scattered by the German police and four women were condemned to four months' imprisonment 'for having broken the German law forbidding all unauthorized demonstrations'. At Ghent a similar incident occurred and a group of people carrying a black flag, the symbol of famine, clamoured for the intervention of the traitor Elias who had been appointed burgomaster

at Ghent by the Germans. The latter, not having the courage to face the angry crowd, took flight in his car. He has since been given the nickname of 'The Hare of the New Order'.

It is characteristic of the mentality of the Belgian people that nobody considers the British blockade responsible for the famine which exists in the country. The propaganda campaign carried out in this connection by the Germans, both from Brussels radio and in the controlled press, ended in a complete failure. The Belgians know that the requisitioning and despatch of food-stuffs to Germany and the presence of an army of occupation are responsible for the famine. One of the many proofs of this can be found in a recent incident which occurred at Ledeberg near Ghent. A crowd was demonstrating in front of the town hall against the non-distribution of the rations. The Flemish-nationalist burgomaster appointed by the Germans thought that this would be a good opportunity, in a speech addressed to the crowd, to lay the responsibility of the food scarcity upon the English. He was at once attacked from all sides, and in spite of the body-guards protecting him, was badly beaten up. By adopting this courageous attitude of solidarity with the Allies, even though this means that they must suffer severely, the Belgian people are giving evidence of clear-sightedness and real strength of character.

The Working Class.

The situation of the working class is tragic. Before the war they had Trade Unions organized on a solid basis, extensive and efficient social services, and a press which, while devoted to their interests, was also deeply attached to national institutions. During the last twenty years the working class constantly extended its sphere of influence, and the intellectual and moral standards of the Belgian workers improved steadily. They were successful in passing through Parliament a body of social reforms which made Belgium one of the most progressive countries in Europe. All this was lost overnight.

The Free Trade Union movement was banned by the enemy and all its branches dissolved. By way of substitute a peculiar type of Union was set up under the name of 'Union of Manual and Intellectual Workers', and it was placed under the leadership of the traitor De Man. This association has no freedom of action whatever; not even a committee meeting may take place without a previous sanction and without the presence of a German

delegate. It enjoys therefore, no authority and Belgian employers refuse to negotiate with it. On 28th July and 31st July, 1941, the enemy-controlled newspapers *Volk en Staat* and *Nouveau Journal*, did not hesitate to state that the 'wait-and-see' attitude of the once militant Unions paralyses the working class and stands in the way of the formation of strong workers' organizations. It is interesting, too, to observe that *Le Travail*, the official paper of this peculiar Trade Union, has a circulation of no more than 10,000 and that in August, 1941, it had to discontinue daily publication and confine itself to a weekly edition.

Characteristic of the attitude of the Belgian body of employers to this single Trade Union protected by the Germans was the circular sent by the most important Belgian guild, the 'Central Industrial Committee', to its members advising them to have no dealings with the delegates of this Trade Union. Belgian industrialists thus refused to recognize the delegates of this single Trade Union as being authorized representatives of the working class. They continued to consult the representatives of the former Trade Unions on all problems concerning their relations with the workers.

Owing to the absence of export markets and the shortage of raw materials, Belgian economic life is now at a standstill and a large number of workers must of necessity go to work in Germany. The Germans well remember the wave of angry condemnation which was caused in the United States in the 1914-18 period, by the deportation of Belgian workers, and they have, therefore, adopted a device just as efficient but more concealed. They have simply abolished unemployment relief and have withdrawn the ration-cards of unemployed workers who refuse to go and work in Germany.

As far as workmen are concerned the usual procedure is the following:—

The unemployment exchanges are supposed to give the Germans lists of all workers without employment and more particularly of skilled workers; they are then offered immediate employment in Germany, and if they refuse to go the unemployment relief is cancelled. The same offer is made to craftsmen, and small manufacturers who are suffering from the economic crisis. If they prefer to stay in their country, and continue their business as best they can, their ration cards are cancelled and thus they are forced to go to Germany in order to live.

As the Belgian body of employers offer the strongest possible resistance in order to keep the workmen, a veritable man-hunt was organized. In order to turn out into the streets the greatest possible

number of single men who were more readily disposed to leave the country than married men, a German decree ordered that in business concerns where more than five workmen were employed, bachelors, divorced men and widowers should give up their posts to married men. Since collections were made in order to support the workmen and to make visits to the unemployment exchanges unnecessary, the Germans decreed that in certain seasonal industries, unemployment relief should be paid by the employers.

They also tried to win over the support of the workmen by giving glowing accounts of the high salaries in Germany, telling them that only a short apprenticeship of a few months was necessary to make them familiar with German industry, and that after this period of probation they would be given employment in Belgium.

Once they arrived in Germany, all these promises made to the 'voluntary' workers were broken. Taxes reduced their salaries by half; the length of the contract was doubled, and often the workmen were given the heaviest manual tasks. To prevent them returning to Belgium they were given neither valid passports nor exit permits. In these conditions many of them ran the risk of being imprisoned in order to return to their country without permission. But the most scandalous thing was that the Belgians themselves had to pay the salaries of these unfortunate people. Nazi propagandists made a great point of the fact that the Belgian workers had already sent back 800 million francs (£6,500,000) to their families. What they omitted to say was that these sums of money were held up at the Belgo-German Clearing House and that it was the National Bank of Belgium which was obliged to make the payments to the workers' families.

The conditions under which the victims of the Nazis are compelled to work in Germany are most unsatisfactory, and all the evidence goes to show that they are for the most part sent to districts most liable to aerial bombardment. An irrefutable proof of this is provided by the large number of Belgian workers who have been killed in Germany.

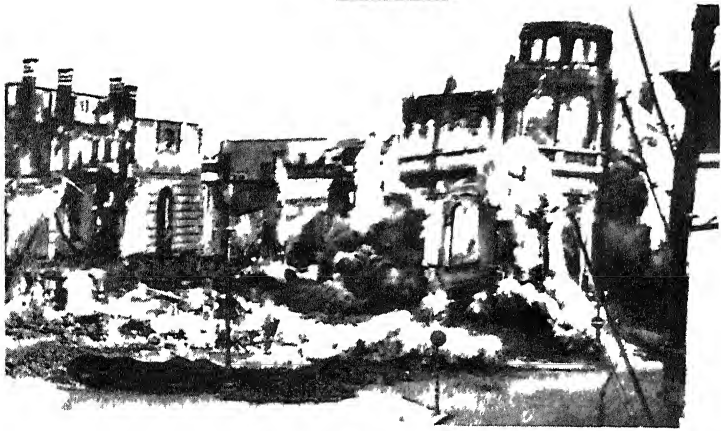
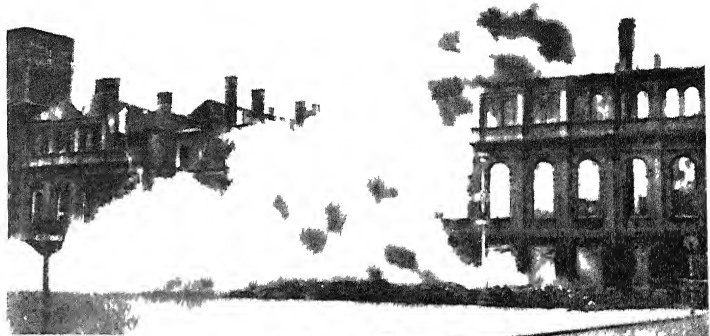
On 10th May, 1941, the number had reached several hundreds, and in every big town there were numerous cases of men who had come back wounded from the Reich. These unfortunates are deprived even of the comfort of being properly nursed in their own country, since the Nazis have requisitioned nearly all the hospitals for their soldiers wounded on the Russian front and Belgian patients have been ejected with the cynical brutality which is characteristic of that race.



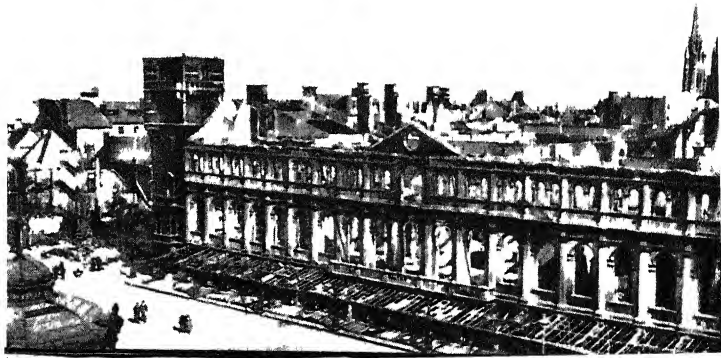
Some of the first German troops to enter Brussels passing the House of Representatives.

Namur under German bombardment.





The Hotel de Ville at
Ostende before, during,
and after the German
bombardment.



The Belgian co-operative movement has also received rough treatment at the hands of the enemy, and is carrying on under the most difficult conditions. The great 'Maisons du Peuple' in Brussels, Charleroi, and Liège were taken over by the Germans, and in smaller places these houses have become the headquarters of the 'Winterhilfe' organization.

Life in the country is just as dreary as life in the towns. The 1940 harvest had been partly destroyed by military operations, and the 1941 harvest suffered from a lack of seed. As the German army in their requisitioning concentrated mainly on cattle, the livestock of the country has diminished in a most astonishing manner. It is impossible to obtain food for poultry, consequently their number has been reduced from 13,000,000 to 3,000,000. Since the beginning of the Russian campaign, the requisitioning of horses has vastly increased; this was carried out with great brutality, and evidence has been received of several instances where Luxemburg peasants were struck with the whip by German officers.

The agricultural association, placed under the leadership of the Flemish nationalist Meeuwissen, is instructed to fix the quantities of foodstuffs to be handed over by each farmer. Since all farmers are forced to belong to this association, its functions extend to the whole of the Belgian agricultural world. But the farmers show considerable opposition to the decisions of the association, and at the end of October, 1941, 60 per cent of Belgian farmers were accused of not having handed over their entire wheat harvest to the authorities controlling the distribution of cereals used in the making of bread. Sentences are frequently passed, and are extremely severe; fines as high as 150,000 francs are often inflicted.

The price of live-stock has risen at a most fantastic rate as a result of the German requisitioning. A horse valued at 4,000 francs before the war, is now worth 60,000 francs—15 times as much. Hiring alone costs 350 francs per day.

A cattle census was decreed and the penalty inflicted on anyone refusing to submit to this was the confiscation of his entire stock of cattle. In order to dodge these measures, the Walloon peasants do what their ancestors did in the sixteenth century, to avoid the Spanish raiding parties: when they see the inspectors coming they disappear with all their stock and hide it in the woods.

Very often the requisitioning can only be carried out by force. Recently riots broke out at Carlsbourg and Paliseul, in the province of Luxemburg. A large number of peasants were imprisoned for having refused to submit to the requisitioning order.

Acts of Sabotage

Acts of sabotage against the property and installations of the German army are now more frequent during the present occupation of Belgium than during any year of the previous war. They are not the work of systematic and organized groups, but spontaneous demonstrations of popular wrath. Foremost among them are the destruction of telephone wires and electric cables installed by the German army, as well as the burning of military depots or factories working for the enemy. The destruction of telephone wires and cables occurred, in addition to other localities, in the following communes, where they were punished: Dison, Andrimony, Jupille, Petit-Rechair, Soumagne, Olm, Nieuport, Mons, Renaix, Dinant, Schaerbeek, Bruxelles, Selzaete, Ertvelde, Assenede, Namur, Bruges. From the beginning of the occupation to December, 1940, 110 acts of sabotage were perpetrated against the German army's lines of communications; this figure has been tripled since then, owing to the fact that long hours of black-out, as well as the cutting down of the German garrisons, encouraged outrages. The Germans usually punish these acts by arresting hostages, or prisoners of war from Germany, or mobilizing men to maintain communications on pain of their lives. Nor do they hesitate to inflict the death-penalty, as in the case of the patriot from Ghent, Cours Remy, who was shot in January, 1941. Years of imprisonment are meted out in great number, and the Germans have arrested more Belgian patriots during the first eighteen months of the occupation than during the four years between 1914-18.

Fires often break out very mysteriously: for instance, at three factories in the Ardennes, an artificial silk factory in Tubize, a rubber factory reopened in the suburbs of Antwerp, petrol installations in the port of Antwerp, a tannery at Saventhem near Brussels, installations of the Coppee factories' by-products at Haine-St. Paul; damage was also caused to the blast-furnaces at Athus. On several occasions large quantities of munitions were rendered unusable by patriots. It is now learnt that eight inhabitants of the town of Liège have been condemned to death for having destroyed high tension electric cables.

It is quite common to find a whole series of acts of sabotage taking place in one day, acts which vary from the derailing of a train to putting collieries out of order. Towns are frequently forced to pay fines of 1 to 2 million francs: and to pay these fines, industrial concerns are taxed.

The Germans have done everything they could to check this general wave of sabotage. The owners of industrial, agricultural, and forestry concerns were made responsible for the smooth

running of their organizations. A decree issued by the German military commander forced men to mount guard at night, along the telephone and railway lines: the death penalty is inflicted on those who do not fulfil this obligation. Belgian hostages were even placed in certain trains. Strikes were forbidden, but they occurred on several occasions at Ghent and at Liège, as a protest against the famine which was taking its toll of the working class. Following a series of fires in corn shops, General Von Falkenhausen decreed that cases of sabotage would be punished by the death penalty, and announced that hostages would be arrested.

The Germans use the most revolting methods in order to compel the working class to work for them. Belgian factories and their staffs are requisitioned: the workers are not allowed to leave their machine under any circumstances, and during air-raids the doors of the workshops are closed. In spite of all these measures, the workers damage their machinery to slow down production.

In some cases, however, sabotage takes the most curious forms, as the following instance will show. The Germans were short of nickel for their special steel, and decided to withdraw the 5 franc nickel piece from circulation in occupied Belgium after the 1st July, 1941. All the municipal treasuries were ordered to hand over all the pieces they possessed, tram conductors were not allowed to take them as payment. The Belgians were not slow to understand why these pieces were withdrawn from circulation: so they preferred to hide them and out of a total of 2 million francs—the amount of pieces in circulation, only six per cent was given up.

The same thing happened when the Germans decided to organize a collection of old paper under pretext of obtaining raw material for paper factories and of giving work to 62,000 Belgian workers. The secret Press at once gave the watchword, 'Burn your old papers, don't give them to the Germans. They require them for various evil purposes, the chief of which is unrestrained propaganda based on lies.' A similar situation occurred when the Germans ordered all used articles made of a metal other than iron to be handed over: that is to say, copper, tin, nickel, lead, bronze, alpaca. In spite of the fact that a complicated system was introduced, whereby the amount of articles handed over was in proportion to taxes paid in 1939, the collection, which was due to finish on the 30th November, 1941, only yielded very poor results, because the population had buried most of the copper and nickel objects.

Newspapers in enemy pay are now trying to soften the feelings of the population by publishing letters which they claim to have received from hostages themselves or from their wives or mothers. The Rexist paper *Le Pays Reel* publishes some of these appeals,

and adds the following significant threat: 'It is to be hoped that Belgians will understand that the life of the hostages is in danger.' The truth is that sabotage in every form is becoming more and more widespread, in spite of the fact that the number of Belgians arrested during 18 months of Nazi occupation is already much greater than that of our fellow-countrymen imprisoned during the 1914-18 occupation. But German terrorism puts a halt to neither disturbances nor acts of sabotage. Belgian patriots reply to the executions by blowing up the headquarters of the Gestapo in Brussels. The situation is so serious that on the 19th December, 1941, the two Secretaries-General Schuieu and Romsée pointed out to the population that in spite of their efforts, the hostages had been shot, and he appealed to them to behave calmly to prevent any more blood being shed. A large number of the hostages ¹ are sent to the terrible concentration camp at Breendonck where, so it was reported recently, seven people died in a single day.

¹ When an act of sabotage has been committed or a sentinel has been attacked, Belgian Members of Parliament always figure very prominently among the large number of hostages seized by the Germans. Thus the following men were arrested: MM. Pholien, former Minister (one of the three signatories of the legal decree concerning the capitulation of the army and the powers of the legal Government), Dierck, former Minister, Bouchery, former Minister and Vice-President of the Chamber; Deveze, Van Glabbick, Fischer, Lahaut, all Members of Parliament; Van Keesbeek, alderman of Malines and former Member of Parliament; Buisseret, senator. The senator Heyndels died as a result of the ill-treatment he received at the hands of the Gestapo. Many attempts on the lives of German soldiers occurred in Malines, the native town of MM. Bouchery and Van Keesbeek; the latter were, therefore, thrown into the terrible camp at Breendonck (in the Antwerp province). Appalling treatment is meted out to all prisoners in this camp which has a reputation as sinister as the German camps at Orianenbourg-Sachsenhausen, or Fuhlsbutter. Several prisoners die every day agonizing deaths. Such atrocities had not been witnessed in Belgium since the days of the Spanish Inquisition.

CHAPTER 8

German Impact on Belgian Life

FOR the last twenty months Belgium has been living under foreign occupation. Its life used to be happy and easy, prices were low and the purchasing power of wages relatively high. The capital accumulated in savings was considerable and it helped the country to withstand many difficult periods. The conditions of the workers were constantly improving and there had been a considerable development in the social services. Admittedly, there were some poor people but nobody capable of working knew the meaning of hunger.¹ There were no beggars in the streets. The State, in itself rather unenterprising and bureaucratic, was administered by men who were honest and competent. No matter what circumstances prevailed, the Motherland smiled indulgently and extended her protecting hand to all her children, rich and poor alike.

To-day nothing remains of all that. Poverty, hunger, and the humiliation of foreign domination have cast a shadow of dismal gloom over the whole Belgian people.

Life now presents a dreary picture in this country which was once so happy. Strict as is the black-out in England, it is not nearly so severe as in the towns and villages of Belgium, where the tiniest chink of light is enough to bring a German bullet through the window without warning. At 11 p.m. all cafés, places of entertainment, and public houses are closed, the streets must be emptied, and everyone has to be indoors.

But often when outrages against German soldiers or acts of sabotage have been committed in a town, the curfew is sounded at 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening and public establishments are closed for long periods. When the curfew sounds a few stragglers hurry along through the darkness hugging the walls to escape

¹ The number of unemployed before September, 1939, ranged from 110,000. This figure may be considered as being very low if it is realized that the population of the country numbered 8½ million inhabitants and that the Belgian economic activity depended to a very large extent on the international situation. One should, moreover, take into consideration the fact that among these unemployed were 30,000 to 40,000 men who, according to an official estimate, had become unfit for employment. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Belgium, like England, was a highly industrialized country whose situation could not be compared in any way with that of other more agricultural countries such as Denmark and Norway. The unemployed received compensation allowances to the value of two-thirds of the salary of an unskilled worker. Another fact must also be remembered, namely, that in Belgium, partial and seasonal unemployment was liable for compensation.

the vigilance of the Gestapo patrols. Then the endless night sets in, disturbed by one noise which makes hearts tremble with hope and joy—the zooming of English planes on their way to bomb Germany. Silently the people pray that they may penetrate as far as possible and that they may return safely from their errand of destruction. And always in the early hours of the morning the planes are heard returning, bearers of vengeance and liberation.

Then dawns yet another day of misery. Food must be found for the family. The man goes off to some office or other where people still busy themselves with the make-belief that there is really something to do.

In the cinemas English and American films have been banned, and the only ones to be seen consist of sentimental and military trash, the product of German cinema genius. Every cinema programme must include a German news-reel. These, however, infallibly gave rise to outbursts of laughter, ironical remarks and derisive clapping which made it necessary to prohibit all such demonstrations. Since then it has become usual either to wait outside until the news is over, or to go and smoke a cigarette in the corridor while the gloomy spectacle of the 'successes' of the Rome-Berlin axis is put on the screen. In addition there has been a notable decrease in the size of cinema audiences in the past few months.

Few people read the newspapers, which are under enemy control, and still fewer believe what they read. On the occasions when the word of command is given in the Belgian broadcast of the B.B.C. from London not to buy newspapers, it is carried out with an impressive unanimity and nine-tenths of the papers are returned unsold. When certain enthusiasts of the New Order, anxious to show themselves worthy of the confidence placed in them by their masters, show too much zest in their articles in the Brussels press, they receive next day dozens of anonymous letters saying: 'We will get the Germans and you with them.'

It was perhaps to be expected that the German troops in Belgium should renew contact with the universities in their characteristic fashion, by burning the library of Louvain University for the second time in twenty-five years. Of the 900,000 books in the library, only 15,000 were saved from the flames: of the 800 precious manuscripts 15 alone remain. The damage to the library building itself is estimated at 8½ million francs. The loss to the academic world is inestimable. Adding insult to injury, the Nazis proceeded to accuse the British troops of having set fire to the building. Needless to say, no one in Belgium paid the

slightest attention to this calumny; the Nazis' game was all too clear.

The University which came under the earliest supervision was, of course, Brussels University. It was the strongest seat of liberty of thought in the country and it was an independent institution, nominating its own professors. A large number of Belgium's liberal politicians graduated from Brussels. The Nazis of course saw fit to start exercising a strict control over the university authorities. First of all ten professors holding chairs at the University, men who had never troubled nor wished to hide their anti-Nazi sentiments, were forbidden by the German controller to give their lectures. This controller, Dr. Waltz, was himself Professor of International Law at Breslau University and can hardly have failed to realize the supreme irony of his situation. At one point he tried to take over Professor Rolin's course on international law. The professor, a member of the Senate, had been asked to stop his lectures in which he had voiced his approval of collective security and had advocated resistance to German aggression. (After having been arrested, then released, Professor Rolin, who was one of the leaders of the resistance in Belgium, managed to outwit the Gestapo and arrived in England not long ago.) Dr. Waltz, however, was soon relieved of his self-appointed position by the administrative Council of the University.

University life muddled along for several months. The students availed themselves of every opportunity to profess their patriotism and they were foremost in the mass demonstrations of 11th November, 1940, and 21st July, 1941.

Then things reached a grand climax over the squabbles concerning the nomination of successors to those professors who had gone into exile: the University Council had so far refused to make definite appointments in their place. In November, 1941, the German authorities put up three candidates, whose sole merit consisted in being pro-German. The Council was threatened with dissolution, with the closing of the University, and students were told that they would be forbidden to put their names down at any other university. But in spite of these threats the Council stood firm; it issued orders that the professors should stop their lectures. As a result ten members of the Council were arrested; fines were imposed on others, and the free University was forthwith closed.¹

¹ The names of the professors who have been removed to the concentration camp at Huys are as follows: R. Marcq, Barrister at the Supreme Court of Appeal and Professor of Law; L. Comil, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions at the Court of Appeal and Professor of Law; R. Catteau, Senator and Member of the

Let us pay tribute to those courageous men of learning who preferred prison to the company of the traitors to their country.

The situation is appreciably different at the Flemish University of Ghent because it is a state university and its professors are appointed by the Ministry of Education. In their attempt to gain control of the intellectual life of Flanders, the Germans concentrated mainly on this University. First of all they tried to reinstate the traitors who had been appointed professors at the University of Ghent during the previous occupation and who had fled after the Allied victory to Holland and Germany. Thus Dr. Anton Jacob, when he came back from Hamburg where he had worked for German propagandists, found his professorship awaiting him; Dr. Speleers, former rector of the activist University, came back from Holland and was appointed professor, as well as Dr. Van Roosbrouck and Dr. Martens, who was also a professor from 1914-18; the latter were both members of the Flemish national party.

This is perhaps the only example in history where a people have twice witnessed the reinstatement of the same traitors in the same posts by the same invader. But these gentlemen can hardly have proved themselves zealous enough for German taste because it was not long before a batch of German professors was appointed. Steinbach, Mackemen, Wagner, and Rohr were appointed to lecture in European history, literature, prehistory, and ethnology in the University of Ghent.

But in spite of all these treacherous machinations the majority of the students have shown tremendous pluck and, in defiance of the German appointed professors, still speak English among themselves and make no secret of their admiration for the R.A.F.

Nor have young Flemish intellectuals allowed themselves to be beguiled by the so-called Germano-Flemish collaboration. As in all occupied countries the Germans try to make an impression on the minds of young people, and to win over their sympathies. In Belgium these attempts have resulted in a complete failure—more complete perhaps, than in any other country. Labour camps which have been created are going to rack and ruin for lack of volunteers. The pro-British sympathies of school-children

Board of Directors of the University: G. Charlier, Professor of Arts and Philosophy; A. Dustin, Professor of Medicine; E. Baes, Professor at the Polytechnic School; L. Hauman, Professor of Science; and M. Vauthier, Professor of Law.

The enemy-controlled press is obviously seeking to justify the closing of the Free University by saying that since the University was founded on liberal democratic principles, it was impossible to maintain it as such, and that it had to be replaced by a State University.

are so strong that the Rexist leader wanted to create 'Student Guilds' whose aim would be, so he said, to fight against 'British intellectual dictatorship'. His efforts met with no success. Flemish national socialists tried to enroll all the young men in their party. In imitation of 'Adolph Hitler' German schools, they established at Vilvorde, near Brussels, a totalitarian school for 'political soldiers and leaders' in their party. The internal regime was very strict so that a system of what they called 'complete education' could be put into force. As one might expect the number of hours devoted to intellectual development was less than in ordinary schools: physical training held a much more important place. If any pupils ever graduate from this school—and it is extremely doubtful, seeing that the 'course' is supposed to last for six years—they will certainly be more qualified for careers as bodyguards than leaders.

At the University of Liège everybody is united against the occupation authorities. Professors and students share the same patriotic faith, the same hatred of oppression and German methods. Indeed all the evidence shows that in spite of orders issued by the occupation authorities concerning the revision of school text-books, in spite of the fact that all works in public libraries protesting against German imperialism, and national-socialist crimes, have been removed, Flemish and Walloon intellectuals have remained faithful to their traditional ideal of liberty and human dignity.

In the Law Courts several magistrates have willingly run the risk of arrest in order to fulfil their duty as patriots.

When the Germans put up a poster representing Mr. Churchill sneering at a hungry Belgian family, the population was not slow to react: even on the first night most of them were torn down and on those which remained Mr. Churchill's head had been transformed into Hitler's. The Belgian attorneys had the printer-publisher of this poster arrested for having broken a Belgian law which forbids insults to foreign heads of states. Similarly, the attorneys arrested those who had first enlisted recruits for the so-called 'anti-bolshevik legions' intended to fight against the Russians; they were thus acting in pursuance of another Belgian law which forbids recruitment for a foreign army. As a result of these actions the Germans arrested the King's attorneys of Brussels, Malines, Louvain, and Charleroi. Even in the police force and constabulary there are ardent groups of patriotic propagandists; the chief superintendent of the Antwerp police force was recently condemned to two years' imprisonment for being in possession of secret pamphlets! Constables are frequently

arrested and one of them has just been shot for having organized acts of sabotage and protected the perpetrators.

The best description of resistance in Belgian intellectual circles is given by Léon Degrelle himself in his paper *Le Pays Reel*, where he writes that in the Brussels' law courts is found the greatest centre of resistance to the New Order. 'This resistance,' he writes, 'is found in the magistracy, in higher education circles, in the clergy, in the medical world, in the world of trade and finance, and in the salons.' After this enumeration one begins to wonder where, among the ruling classes, collaborators are really to be found!

Persecution of the Belgian Jews by the Germans.

Throughout their entire history the Belgian people have always shown the greatest tolerance towards the Jews. The persecutions to which the latter were subject in Belgium before the French Revolution were instigated by foreign oppressors who had occupied the country, and especially by fanatical Spanish tyrants. But after the Belgian Revolution of 1830, Jews enjoyed exactly the same rights as other citizens. Many Jewish families were completely assimilated and produced men whose names were respected and whose activities were extremely profitable to Belgium in the banking world, high commerce, the liberal professions, and politics. During the 1914-18 war, and also during the 1940 campaign, Belgium had several generals of Jewish origin. Belgian Jews were never a source of unrest in their adopted country, and in no way weakened her.

When, after Hitler came into power, millions of Austrian and German Jews poured into Belgium, the Rexist and Flemish-National parties attempted to create an anti-semitic movement especially among the lower middle-classes. It was a complete failure. The refugee emigrants in the populous suburbs of Antwerp and Brussels represented a body of people who had played no part in politics, and who for the most part had been placed in Jewish households. It may be said that before this war, there was no more a Jewish problem in Belgium than there was in England.

The registration of private Jewish business concerns only disclosed the existence of 7,600 Jewish firms, a much lower number than in the other countries of Europe. Nevertheless, banks were no longer allowed to accept deposits from Jewish hands. Jews have had to declare their property to a special office created to control their business activities and German commissioners have been

placed in the most important undertakings. All Jews have been struck off the Register of the Stock Exchange and of the list of Bankers and are debarred from following any of the liberal professions. Jewish university professors have been removed from their position. These measures were taken to enforce a series of German decrees which were issued as early as June, 1940, which also forbade Jews who had left Belgium in May, to return to the country. In addition, the communal authorities had to register Jews over the age of 15, and this registration had to be noted on their identity card. Jews were forbidden to be members of the teaching profession and could not hold posts as managers, directors, or editors in newspaper or broadcasting concerns: Jewish officials were forced into retirement. All Jews had to be relieved of their duties before the 31st December, 1940, at the latest. These measures were soon followed by others which rendered any economic activity increasingly difficult for Jews. In Brussels the licence for Jewish merchants to sell in covered markets and on street stalls was not renewed on the 31st December, 1940. In May, 1941, another German decree reinforcing the decree of 28th October, 1940, reduced still further Jewish activity in the economic sphere and in June, 1941, a further decree ordered that all ground belonging entirely or in part to Jews should be seized!

In addition to all this a whole series of humiliating and segregative measures were taken against the Jews.

At Antwerp which has the largest Jewish community in Belgium, Jews are forbidden to enter public parks and swimming pools: they are not even allowed to park their cars in the street and in public places, by virtue of a decree of the *Orts Kommandantur*. They can only travel by train if they have special permission. As in the other occupied territories, Jews in Belgium have to wear a distinguishing armlet. In Brussels Jewish workmen who cannot prove that they have employment are sent to a special camp at Terveuren, where they are compelled to clean out drains and to do other road labour. Jewish children are not allowed to attend public schools, but must receive instruction in special establishments. In short, the Germans are gradually seeking to apply the Nuernberg laws.

Inevitable arrests and deportations follow one another in rapid succession. Foreign Jews in Antwerp have been sent to a concentration camp near Hasselt in the Limburg province. Jews of Polish origin, even when they have acquired Belgian nationality, are sent back to Poland into ghettos established by the Germans. This is, of course, a flagrant breach of the Hague

Convention which forbids the deportation of citizens in occupied countries.

These racial discriminations, so contrary to all Belgian traditions naturally gave rise to feelings of horror and disgust. The barristers attached to the Court of Appeal in Brussels for instance have refused to apply these measures and decided to retain in their list the names of their Jewish colleagues.

Thus the tolerant attitude of the Belgian authorities towards the Jews is the subject of bitter criticism by partisans of the New Order. At the end of January, 1942, Felix Frank, Leon Degrelle's Secretary, on his return from Russia, declared in the Brussel's *Le Soir* : 'I am very astonished' and indignant to see the tolerance, to say nothing of the kindness of the Belgian authorities.'

Hundreds of books opposed either to the national-socialist ideology or to the Pan-German policy of the Reich have been removed from public libraries, and all bookshops are forbidden to sell them. Further, all textbooks have been revised by the 'protectors', and wherever passages were found in history books dealing with the atrocities perpetrated by the German army in Belgium, the offending pages were torn out. Anti-masonic exhibitions were organized by the Rexists in Brussels, Antwerp, and Liège, but of course they met with no success at all with the Belgian people and merely provoked hearty contempt. At the beginning of 1941 the property of Belgian freemasons was confiscated, and in the Great Masonic Temple in the Rue de Laeken in Brussels, Leon Degrelle has the headquarters of his legion. It is there that a bomb was thrown and the secretary of the Rexist party was killed.

Patriotic Demonstrations.

To revenge the occupation of their homes by the Germans, the Belgians have invented many stratagems. A favourite tactic is to convince the Nazi soldiers, slowly and with infinite cunning and guile, that a German defeat is inevitable. At first the Nazi soldiers smiled with derision, but their faith is slowly shaken by conversations with people very often more intelligent or more educated than themselves.

Proof that these successful tactics were adopted throughout the whole of Belgium, is found in the numerous sentences passed by the military courts against the offenders. At Lokeren in East Flanders the entire garrison were removed from private billets when the officers discovered the increasing demoralization of

their men. At Huy and Namur, civil servants of the local administration accused of disparaging the Germans' morale by their comments and gossip, were sent to prison.

As in Holland, where the same methods were used with equal success, the Germans now seldom lodge their soldiers in private houses. The inhabitants of the country have defended in the most humorous and effective manner the intimacy of their homes.

Despite all these trials, miseries, and humiliations, the spirit of the people remains indomitable. To-day there is more determination, more enthusiasm than at any time since 10th May and final victory is regarded as clear certainty. Each day of National Commemoration is the signal for more demonstrations. On the 11th November, 1940, the 22nd anniversary of the victory of the Allies, an enormous crowd gathered round the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Brussels singing the Brabançonne, God save the King, and the Marseillaise. The patriots broke through the cordon of Belgian police, who put up a half-hearted resistance, and proceeded to lay a wreath of flowers on the British Monument. Numerous Belgians were arrested by the German police who intervened with machine-guns. Eight people were given various sentences ranging from three months' imprisonment to five years' hard labour. On the 10th May, 1941, and on the 21st July, 1941, fresh disturbances of a violent nature broke out in the streets of Brussels and an immense crowd surged into the Place des Martyrs, around the Monument of those who fell in the War of Independence in 1830. On the Place St. Aubin in Namur, following a most impressive ceremony in the Cathedral, the crowd began to sing the Brabançonne under the very noses of the furious Germans. In Liège violent disorders which continued all day long necessitated the intervention of the police. Throughout Belgium, in Charleroi, Mons, Nivelles, Tournai, Antwerp, Ghent, unrest grew as the day went on. In spite of the German orders to work, production was at a standstill that day and nobody went either to factories or to offices.

As a result of these demonstrations, in Antwerp alone, seventy-three people had to appear before the Military court of that town. Judgment was passed upon them nearly two months after the national celebration, and with the exception of three all received sentences. One of the accused who had offered resistance to a German constable was condemned to four years' imprisonment. Others were given four to nine months' imprisonment for having insulted the German army. Many students appeared among the condemned.

On the 11th November, 1941, the anniversary of the Armistice,

and on the 15th November, the King's patronal day, the people of Brussels once again gave vent to their patriotic feelings. At the close of the Te Deum sung in the collegiate church of St. Gudule the congregation sang the Brabançonne and cries of 'Long Live the King', 'Long Live Belgium', 'Long Live the R.A.F.' resounded from all sides. In churches in the suburbs, people sang 'God save the King' after the Brabançonne. German repressive measures were even more severe than after the 21st July; within a few days more than 650 people were arrested in Brussels.¹

The mass of the Belgian people to-day are the victims of hunger and misery, they are humiliated and maltreated by the enemy. Yet all classes—the working class and the middle class, the conservatives, the liberals, and the socialists seem to be dominated in the most unmistakable and reassuring way by the same feelings. In the first place, they are stirred by a burning faith in the Allied victory, which they hold as absolutely certain and by boundless admiration for the resistance and determination of the British and the Russians. Secondly they are full of savage and pitiless hatred for the traitors, for all the accomplices of the enemy and for all who profited from his conquest—a unique phenomenon, which in the last analysis is really terrifying. For the first time the people of Belgium have learned to hate. All thoughts turn to the purge which victory will bring, and speedy and ruthless justice. In every town and in every village a list of the guilty is ready. The leniency shown after the last war is openly regretted. This time prison will not be sufficient; nothing short of death is demanded for the traitors. Bloody excesses and terrible reprisals are almost inevitable. Such are the extremes of feeling into which protracted bitterness and suffering can throw a peace-loving and forbearing nation.

The Attitude of the Belgian Clergy

The Belgian Catholic Church lost no time in affirming, and in the most resolute manner, its attitude towards the occupation authorities.

¹ Belgium's National Day was celebrated with no less fervour in Belgian prison camps in Germany. Interned Belgian officers presented themselves at the morning roll-call of the 21st July with tricoloured cockades on their flags, and Belgian tunics, made of red, yellow, and black cloth were hoisted from the prison windows. These demonstrations naturally led to severe reprisals on the part of the Germans; these were, however, courageously endured by those who had thus made known their patriotic sentiments. It can be said that on the whole, the attitude of the 75,000 officers and men who are still prisoners in Germany is magnificent in its courage, endurance, and resolution.

On the 20th and 27th October, 1940, the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines ordered to be read in all Belgian churches a pastoral letter in which the clearest and most urgent injunctions were given to Belgian Catholics. The pastoral letter followed a letter from the Pope to the Cardinal, in which the Holy Father said with reference to Belgium: 'What we already knew or feared concerning the appalling state into which the horrors of war have plunged this noble country, has just been confirmed by your letter with details which cause us the greatest sorrow, and which throw a sombre light on the material and religious conditions which have suddenly become the lot of this dear Catholic people.' The Cardinal and the Bishops laid down the following line of conduct for Catholics: 'Nobody can prevent you from keeping alive in your hearts the love of your country, and we believe that nobody would want to prevent this. Certainly those who worship with such fervour their own fatherland would have no right to forbid you to remain faithful to yours. The love of one's country is indeed a sacred duty, a duty which is no less imperative because the country happens to be temporarily in dire straits. A citizen worthy of the name considers his own interests and personal destiny as being one with the interests and destiny of the state. He conscientiously avoids doing anything which might harm the fatherland, he sees to it that his spoken and written statements and his general behaviour can in no way damage or be construed as being hostile to the superior interests of the nation as a whole. In present circumstances these rules of behaviour remain in force. One must doubtless recognize the occupation authorities, since they, in fact, are in authority, and obey them within the limits of international law: but Belgium as a nation still exists, and all her sons owe her fidelity and assistance.'

These outlines of a judicious patriotic conduct were quickly followed by a series of detailed instructions formulated by the Bishops, which proved that the Church intended to act in strict and rigorous conformity with the principles set forth above.

The Belgian clergy plainly showed its opposition to extremist movements as well as to near-military organizations by refusing to give Holy Communion to members of these organizations who appeared in uniform. Mgr. Lamiroy, Bishop of Bruges, revealed on several occasions his intense disapproval of traitor activities by forbidding teachers in Catholic schools to attend meetings organized by Flemish-nationalists, and to read their papers. On the occasion of a demonstration organized at Bruges in memory of Joric Van Severen, an agitator who had been killed at Abbeville, he refused to perform any religious ceremony. Flemish-nationalists attacked

the Bishop's palace, breaking windows and hooting the Bishop. When the Cardinal of Malines expressed his approval of the decision taken by Mgr. Lamiroy, he became a target for the threats and systematic attacks of the German controlled press.

But the entire clergy stands firmly behind its leaders and offers unshakable resistance to extremist agitators: this brave attitude makes a tremendous impression on the Flemish people who had remained deeply religious. Every Sunday an incident occurs in some church or other of the country: communion may be refused to a legionary in uniform, or a sermon is perhaps preached against collaborators and those who do not resist. In order to break down this steadfast patriotism of the priests, the Nazis each month increase their pressure on the church. Staf de Clercq at meetings protests against the attitude of the Clericals; during June, 1941, all Catholic welfare organization, trade unions, and benefit societies were ordered to suspend their activities. All priests who were members of the *Boerenbond*, the huge agricultural co-operative society, were forced to resign. Scholars' societies and all young people's associations were forbidden in Catholic schools, and the Flemish-nationalists, following the German national-socialist lead, sternly forbade the Catholic Church to supervise the education of the young.

The Cardinal himself was twice threatened with heavy fines if the clergy did not modify its attitude, and if prayers were not said in churches for the defeat of Bolshevism, a request which the religious authorities had consistently refused.

This resistance has been openly avowed by Leon Degrelle, leader of the Rexist party and a great admirer of Germany's New Order. He attacks the clergy, saying they are more interested in Mr. Churchill's speeches on Sunday morning than in that day's Gospel. In his paper, *Pays Reel*, he writes: 'Their passionate sermons, their continual interference in political matters, their insults to Hitler and Germany (knowing how harmful such rudeness is to Belgium), the abuse of their clerical rights for provocative and aggressive ends, the atmosphere of rebellion which many priests and monks seem intent on spreading, all this is, quite frankly, unbearable.'

The attitude of his associate Staf de Clercq towards the church is also strongly critical. He constantly reproaches the clergy for discouraging men from joining the Flemish legion on the Russian front.

It was not necessary to wait long for the German reprisals against the Church. All Catholic institutions have been suppressed, likewise the Catholic federations and friendly societies. The young

men are no longer allowed to foregather in the colleges and schools, religious conferences are forbidden, and only sermons in Churches or Chapels are tolerated.

But it was when he spoke to Congress of Christian and intellectual Belgian youth assembled at Wavre-Notre-Dame, in August, 1941, that Cardinal Van Roey expressed himself with greatest clarity, dignity, and courage. Having reminded his audience that the position of Catholics in Germany was not improving but that on the contrary it was becoming worse month by month, and speaking with great fervour to his young listeners, he defined in noble terms the main lines of the policy followed by the Belgian church with regard to the occupation authorities. (*See Appendix 2.*)

Thus the Belgian Church is following once more the national traditions by which it was inspired at the time of Cardinal Mercier, whose tremendous personality is constantly evoked in the secret press. What of the foul deeds, the rough treatment, and persecutions! The way shown by the famous prelate will be followed to the end by all those who hold fast to his memory and his splendid teaching—from the primates of the Church down to competent and modest village priests.

CHAPTER 9

The Underground Press in Belgium

DURING the previous occupation of 1914-18, Belgians achieved outstanding results in the publication of secret newspapers, thanks to their courage and resourcefulness. On the 20th August, 1914, the fateful day when the capital of Belgium was occupied by the Germans for the first time, all the Brussels newspapers ceased to appear. M. de Broqueville, who was at that time Prime Minister of Belgium, congratulated the Belgian journalists who had refused to put themselves at the service of the invaders. He also congratulated the editors who had put their machinery out of order rather than publish papers which would no longer be genuinely Belgian, in so far as they would come directly or indirectly under German censorship, and would consequently help to make the population accept the *fait accompli*. This proud attitude sprang from a very high conception of journalism; a conception which was outlined by the Antwerp *La Métropole* in the following terms: 'It has always been our belief that the journalist's role is not that of a news merchant; rather it is that of a soldier whose weapon is the pen, and who volunteers to serve all good, noble, and just causes, always refusing to accept the gilded yoke of the traitor, the murderer, the brigand and the thief, either to condone such behaviour, or, what is more important, to limit its criminal effects. For it must be known and made known that silence is often worse than betrayal. The Belgian journalist stands in this war as the defender of broken laws, enslaved liberty, outraged women, and murdered hostages.

'The moment he ceases to hold on high the banner of our national rights, of our sorrows and of our hates, not only he ceases to be a Belgian, but he deliberately commits suicide. Being, as he is, an organ of public opinion, depending for his strength, power, and dignity on the common consent of his readers and friends, he does violence to their feelings if he fails to interpret the righteous anger and the unconquerable hopes which stir their hearts; he loses not only their support, but also their respect. In these circumstances, two courses only are open to the Belgian journalist: to publish secretly or in exile, in order to give loud and vigorous expression to his opinions, or to remain silent.'

Consequently, when General von Arnim summoned the editors of the Brussels newspapers to Brussels Town Hall, only a few went out of curiosity, and these simply ignored the offers of collaboration

made by the invader. The same thing happened in 1940, but with this difference: instead of remaining in Belgium, the Belgian editors, with their editorial staffs, followed the Government. When the Germans occupied Brussels, they were forced to appoint hack-writers, completely devoid of talent, to set the papers going again. Of course all this was done against the wishes of the owners, who no longer wanted their papers to appear. After the Franco-German armistice, a certain number of journalists returned to Belgium, but apart from half a dozen or so who held Rexist opinions, they all refused to take up their pens again, and sought a means of livelihood in other professions. There arose the paradoxical situation of Belgian newspapers reappearing with their old titles, against the wishes of their editors, and in spite of the fact that their contributors had given up writing for them.

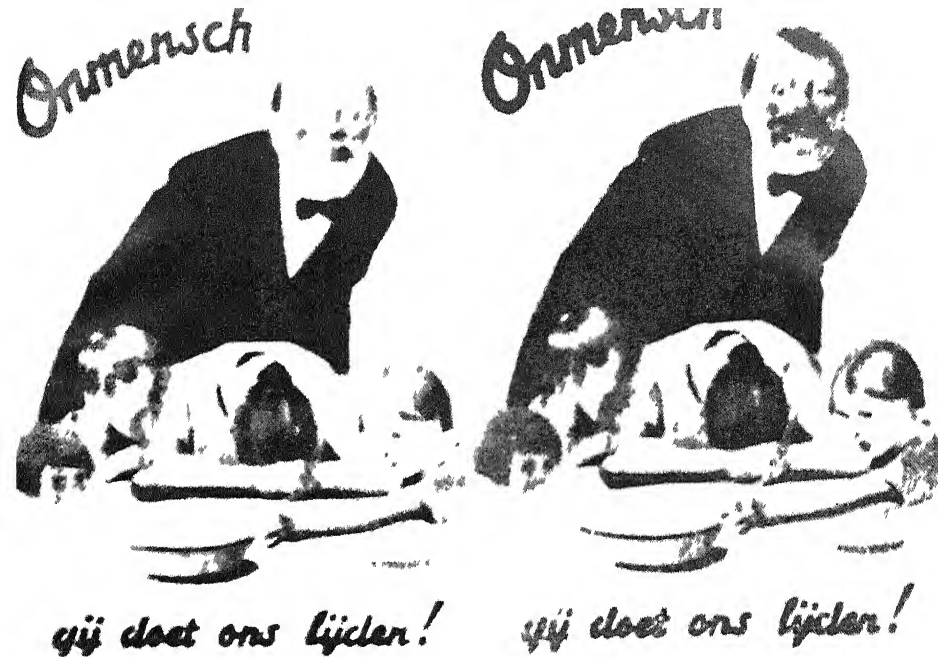
This situation was deliberately brought about by the Germans. A decree of May, 1940, ordered newspapers and periodicals to obtain, before they appeared, permission from the German military authorities. Anybody who wanted to work with the machinery in existence could ask for this permission. The fact that direct censorship was thus brought to bear on the press and that printing presses had been requisitioned in spite of strong opposition from the owners, was disclosed during the course of a lawsuit recently heard in the Seventh Chamber of the Commercial Court of Brussels. An adventurer of the name of Raymond De Becker is at the moment at the head of the famous Brussels paper *Le Soir*. A certain document, however, revealed that on the 31st August, 1940, he had been put in charge of the editorial conduct and management of this paper by the head of the Propaganda Division of Brussels (*Propagande Staffel B*) acting on orders from the head of the German Propaganda and no warning whatsoever had been given to the owners of the paper.

It is understandable that in these conditions Belgian journalists refused to implement the orders of the enemy; patriotic journalists were, therefore, very severely dealt with by the Nazis. The senator De Hasque, owner of the famous Flemish paper *Gazet van Antwerpen*, was arrested and died in a concentration camp because he refused to publish his paper; Mr. Peeters, Director of the Belga Agency, died as the result of the ill-treatment which he had undergone in prison. Many journalists are still in prison, including Mr. Demarteau, President of the Belgian Press Association, and the famous political caricaturist Ochs, who was well known in Belgium for his drawings in anti-Nazi newspaper *Pourquoi Pas?*

On the other hand, a considerable number of Belgian journalists remained in unoccupied France, and in spite of tremendous material

difficulties, prefer to remain in exile, rather than return to a country crushed beneath the heel of the enemy. But in occupied territory, the reaction was not long in taking place. During the previous occupation, it was not until the 1st February, 1915, that the first number of the secret newspaper *La Libre Belgique* appeared; from then on it managed to circulate in a weekly edition, in spite of the efforts of the German police. Many other illegal newspapers appeared, such as *Patrie* published in French and *De Vlaamsche Leeuw* and *De Vrije Stem* published in Flemish. After the occupation of Belgium in May, 1940, this irresistible desire on the part of the Belgian people for the free expression of their opinions showed itself still sooner, and it was on the 15th August, 1940, that the first number of the new *Libre Belgique* appeared. The paper carried on the tradition of cheerful and courageous independence characteristic of its predecessor; it announced once more that its telegraphic address was the *Kommandantur* at Brussels. But this time the publisher was Peter Pan, whose statue stands in a Brussels park, the chief reason for the change being that this statue did not exist in 1915. On the other hand, it always proclaimed in the advertisements that since business was non-existent under German domination, readers were advised to keep their money for better days.

One ought, however, to take into account two facts which add to the credit of those who maintained the 1940 edition of *La Libre Belgique*. Whereas from 1914-18 the underground press represented the only means of keeping the population in touch with war events, Belgians can now hear the daily broadcasts of the B.B.C. Thus the chief aim of the secret press to-day is to expose to the public the pillage and extortion practised by the occupation authorities. But although during the previous occupation several years imprisonment were meted out to those who took part in printing and circulating the paper, it is true that the death penalty was never inflicted. The situation is quite different to-day, for on several occasions death sentences have been pronounced and ruthlessly carried out by the German authorities. We need give only the following examples: During the month of July, 1941, 16 inhabitants of the town of Liège were condemned by the German military court for having edited, written, and circulated illegal pamphlets and newspapers. They were Louis Haye, 27, employed by the Red Cross; Hubert Hottenmarkrs, 36, and Jean Henublet—all of whom were sentenced to 5 years' solitary confinement. Others who received sentences were: Pierre Heyberger, 45—6 years' hard labour; Hélène Heyberger, 25, 4 years' hard labour; Jeanne Wappaerts, 12 months' solitary confinement;



On the left-hand side is a poster numbers of which the Germans stuck up one night in Brussels. It depicts Belgian children starving with the figure of Winston Churchill behind them. The caption runs: "Monster You Make Us Suffer" On the right is one of the posters as it appeared next morning. Belgians have transformed the face of Churchill into that of Hitler.

Belgian Native Troops attacking through the bush in East Africa.



Marguerite Lang, 36, 9 months' solitary confinement; Simone Prichier, 20, 6 months' solitary confinement; Pierre Buchene, 46, 10 months' solitary confinement; Elisabeth Lafnet, 24, 8 months' solitary confinement; Jean Julsonnet, a lawyer and President of the Liège Red Cross Committee, 25 years' solitary confinement. In Eastern Flanders two people were condemned to death for having circulated illegal newspapers as well as copies of B.B.C. news. Even girls of 15 and 17 years have been condemned to prison for having circulated illegal newspapers.

According to *La Libre Belgique* more than 30 illegal newspapers are now published under various titles. These papers, which at the beginning were duplicated, are now mostly printed: the scope and high literary value of their articles prove that they are the work of talented men. Their circulation is relatively wide, and it is known that one secret newspaper with socialistic tendencies has a wider circulation than *Le Travail*, the official organ of the unified Trade Union established by the traitor De Man. It is no less revealing to discover that there exist at this moment at least three newspapers, one published in Brussels, another at Liège, another in Antwerp, which appear under the same magic title of *La Libre Belgique*. Their editorial staff is entirely different, and represents divergent views, for Belgium has retained all shades of political opinion.

The subject matter of the articles, published in the underground press, throws a revealing light on the mentality of the people of the occupied country. Generally speaking the subjects are of a national, and very often local character: this is explained by the fact that since the editors' detailed information of the international situation comes from purely German sources, they avoid any reference to it. They deal chiefly with resistance to the occupying authority: they attack treachery, weakness, and submission. They point to the national traditions of liberty and independence, to the glorious memories of 1914-18, to the noble figures of King Albert the First, Cardinal Mercier, and Burgomaster Adolphe Max, in order to oppose the arbitrary conduct of the enemy with the uncompromising steadfastness. They glorify the feats accomplished by the R.A.F. in the defence of Britain: they express their satisfaction at the existence of a Belgian army in Great Britain. King Leopold's attitude in considering himself a prisoner, and in refusing to have any dealings with his jailors, is unanimously approved, as is the attitude of the Government in continuing to fight at the side of Great Britain. But one of the main features of these papers is the frequent anecdotes (some of which will be published in the supplements) concerning life in occupied territory: the jokes about the Germans show that the satirical and mocking

spirit of the Belgians is still alive. If the enemy is loathed for his tyranny and pillage, it is equally true to say that the ridiculous and grotesque behaviour of the Germans in public does not escape criticism. Nevertheless, it is easy to realize the many and various difficulties which the political expression of this mood, and its publication entail, not to mention the severe punishments to which those who voice this criticism are liable. We will mention only one difficulty: one can imagine how difficult it must be in a country where paper is rationed, to find quantities sufficient to print regular copies of an illegal newspaper.

Amongst the latest to be mentioned are the Flemish papers *Vrij* (Free), *Hier Uylenspiegel* (Here is Uylenspiegel), *De Vrije Schutter* (The Sniper), *Ons Vaderland* (Our Fatherland), and *De Roode Vaan* (The Red Flag). There are also the French newspapers *Sous la botte*, *La Voix des Belges*, *La Brabançonne*, *Feux de barrage* and *l'Union fait la Force*. At Mons there is even a satirical periodical of local interest called, not without humour, *Le Coup de queue du Doudou Montois* (The Whiplash of the Doudou of Mons).

It would be difficult to find a better proof of the prestige of the secret press and of its influence upon the morale of the public than in the pitiful efforts made by journalists of the German controlled press to make their readers believe that 'they too are free'.

Unfortunately for them, the *Brusseler Zeitung*, a paper published in German in Brussels and edited by German journalists, does not hesitate from time to time to rectify this impression. Having stated that censorship of the press was abolished in October, 1940, in order to allow Belgian newspapers the 'liberty they require', it added immediately, after that it was sometimes necessary to prevent a paper discussing certain questions. In actual fact, a representative of the military authorities has reserved for himself a place on the staff of every paper appearing in Brussels, and it is he who fulfills the duties of chief editor.

Everything proves that the circulation of underground newspapers is fairly wide, especially as they are passed on quickly from hand to hand. They are much more to Belgians than a source of moral comfort, they represent the assurance, even in the midst of great danger, of the sacred rights to freedom of expression and thought which our citizens will never forgo. And that is why hundreds of them, in spite of severe repression, take part in the printing and distribution of secret newspapers, and with magnificent courage carry on this stirring struggle of the conquered who refuses to be gagged by the conqueror.

CHAPTER 10

Resistance of the Belgian Municipalities

ONE of the most striking characteristics of Belgian political life has always been the considerable importance which the people attach to municipal politics. This is explained by the historical development of Belgium, in the course of which, from the early Middle Ages until the end of the sixteenth century, the towns wielded great power and continuously and firmly resisted the ambitions of the princes. When finally the princes did crush the force of citizen armies, the towns still kept a large measure of autonomy, and by virtue of their economic importance continued to play a leading part in the affairs of the state.

Later, when the Belgian people found itself under the heavy yoke of successive foreign invasions, burgomasters and aldermen of the big towns, in general freely elected by their fellow-citizens, boldly resisted the autocratic rule of the foreign governors; a number of them paid with their lives for this devotion to the local electorate.

Thus the rule of Municipal Government became so popular and its prestige so enhanced that Belgium could almost be described as a federation of towns and municipalities.

The municipal councils of free Belgium were endowed with these fine traditions of patriotism and courage. During the war of 1914-1918, when the country was occupied by the Germans, it was these councils which, in every possible way, kept up the resistance of the oppressed people, and the manifold variety of their administrative powers proved an impassable barrier to the Germanization of the country. The great Belgian towns have considerable financial resources at their disposal and thousands of persons in their employment: the city of Antwerp, for example, with its teachers, police force, and technical staff employed 8,600 persons.

Further, one of the features of Belgian philanthropic activities is the large variety of charitable societies run by private effort; a large number of these societies were supported by local authorities which also controlled the Public Assistance Boards. It was the Local Authorities, too, which in 1914-18 were responsible for the administration of the rationing scheme and the distribution of provisions. Consequently, during the war, when the country was under foreign occupation, as soon as destitution and famine began to take their toll, local authorities became even more

important—from the moral point of view because they were the only remaining national authority, and from the practical point of view because it was to them that the stricken population turned for help.

The Germans, therefore, who (as has already been shown) have not forgotten the lessons of the previous occupation of the country and who know full well how Belgian resistance was organized from 1914 to 1918, immediately attacked the municipal authorities. They began by dismissing a great number of burgomasters and aldermen for varied and most contradictory reasons; some for their patriotism, their refusal to implement the demands of the enemy, others for having left their posts at the time of the invasion. All these men, punished for desertion of their posts or for the so-called breaches of duty, had one thing in common—they were the fiercest opponents of National Socialism. But the Germans, finding that the resistance of the municipalities was growing rapidly from the end of 1940 and that burgomasters nominated by them were being constantly outvoted in the municipal councils, decided to strike a major blow. On 11th April, 1941, a decree was signed by General Raeder, head of the German administration in Belgium, ordering the dissolution of the municipal councils. This was a flagrant violation of the International Convention of the Hague, article 43 of which forbids the force of one country occupying another country to change the laws of that country.

The decision of the German authorities was duly conveyed to the Belgian burgomasters through the agency of Romsée, appointed General Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior by the Nazis. The manner in which the dissolution of municipal councils was justified was both paradoxical and quaint. General Raeder began by saying that the municipal councils had failed to understand the exigencies of the times and that they had long ceased to represent Belgian public opinion. This was tantamount to a public admission that the councils were opposed to the policy of the occupying power and that every one of them constituted a citadel of civilian resistance. As to the assertion that the municipal councils had long ceased to represent Belgian public opinion, it is hard to understand the Nazi General's fatherly concern for the true representation of the opinions of the Belgian people. This curious interest in the proper functioning of their institutions is contradicted by the fact that the Germans have not the slightest intention of reinstating the municipal councils. It would seem, according to General Raeder, that once more the time is not ripe for such a step.

From then onwards, therefore, the safeguarding of municipal interests was entrusted to individual burgomasters and aldermen who had to confine themselves to enforcing the decrees of the enemy, as transmitted to them by the traitor Romsée.

But the Nazis did not intend to stop at that. A decree of 7th March, 1941, had fixed 60 as the age-limit for all those holding public office. This decree made no distinction between judges and senior civil servants on the one hand, and men answerable to the public for the performance of their duties, such as Members of Parliament, Burgomasters and aldermen, whose position was totally different, on the other. What lay behind this piece of hypocrisy, what was the real object of this move 'to instil new blood into the ranks of public officials', which was in itself yet another flagrant violation of the laws and constitution of the Belgian people? It was, in reality, an attempt to ensure that there should be among the representatives of the provinces and among the members of municipal councils, agents of the enemy who would then try to fill provincial and municipal posts with men of their own kind, i.e. men belonging to that despicable tribe of 'collaborators' and other admirers of the 'New Order', whose admiration is seldom disinterested. Thus, as the result of the two decrees mentioned, the whole of the well-tried and homogeneous administrative system of the Belgian provinces and municipalities fell under the closest possible political control of the enemy and the traitors in his pay. It was the latter's task to exploit it for the political ends of the occupying power—to sow the seeds of dissent, to foster depression, and to lower the morale of the Belgian people.

In consequence, these measures caused a tremendous stir throughout the country and gave rise to a wave of anger and resentment. The Belgian people, deeply attached to its town halls and to the institutions they symbolize, cherished no illusions as to what these perfidious measures really meant. A man must arise and become the voice of the Belgian people. This man was Dr. van de Meulebroeck, Burgomaster of Brussels.

During the war of 1914-18, Joseph van de Meulebroeck had served as a doctor in an artillery unit; he had shown great bravery and unique devotion to his wounded comrades. When victory was won and he had returned to his country, he settled down in Laeken, a suburb of Brussels, in the crowded chaussee d'Anvers. He soon became extremely popular in this humble district; his kindly simplicity, the unselfish way in which he attended to so many patients in the poorest circumstances, his

profound understanding of the miseries and the joys, the likes and dislikes, of the people of Brussels—all these were bound to win the admiration and later the votes of his fellow-citizens. He became first an alderman of Laeken, and when this district was merged in the city of Brussels, he became an important alderman of that city, and remained so for nearly twenty years. He proved himself to be a realistic and practical administrator as well as an indefatigable worker. Here was a dependable and devoted collaborator for Burgomaster Adolphe Max. And yet these men were very different. Adolphe Max had a culture which was essentially French; the more reserved and more elegant of the two, he was one of the familiar figures of the aristocratic Leopold district, where his family residence was situated. But he was also a great and shrewd psychologist and he was surprisingly unerring and accurate in his judgment of men. He liked Dr. van de Meulebroeck and appreciated him; he was one of the first to help and protect the physician of the poor; time and again he defended him against criticisms which came from his personal friends, from his associates, or from his social environment. He knew well what integrity lay behind the plumpness of the old bachelor and what subtlety behind that benevolent smile. During the last months of his life he had again and again recommended Dr van de Meulebroeck as his successor. Subsequent events have proved once more that he, who was one of the greatest men in the history of Belgium, was not wrong.

As soon as he had been informed of the German decrees, Dr. van de Meulebroeck protested to General von Falkenhausen, the Commander-in-Chief of the German army of occupation in Belgium and Northern France. This is what he said in his letter of 19th March, 1941, to the German Commander-in-Chief, referring to the decree of 7th March:

‘Obviously, Sir, the German authorities have the power to take the grave step I have defined and set out above, which constitutes a violation of the rights of the Belgian people; but neither the terms of the Hague Convention which lay down the rules for the conduct of warfare accepted by civilized nations, nor what has occurred in our country since the outbreak of hostilities—gives them any right to do so. My position as the first municipal officer of Belgium makes it imperative for me to lodge an energetic and solemn protest against this arbitrary measure which is, moreover, a serious mistake. I need hardly say that as a result of it the clear-headed sections of the population which, I assure you, form the overwhelming majority of the Belgian people, will develop deep-seated feelings of resentment,

which will not weaken with the passing of time'. Those were indeed strong words.

But the Burgomaster did not intend to stop at this written protest. On Tuesday, 30th June, 1941, the eve of its dissolution, the Council of Aldermen and the principal officers of the municipality met in the Town Hall. Speaking in the name of the aldermen, the venerable M. Coelst recalled the great figure of Adolphe Max, of whom M. van de Meulebroeck was the worthy successor. In the course of his speech he declared with emotion: 'We, in our turn, will not allow ourselves to swerve an inch from the course followed by the burgomasters of the capital. Here, before you, we take this solemn vow. Never shall we yield to the enemy or to the traitors who consent to work with him.' To this stirring denunciation the Burgomaster replied: 'I shall not be long absent from you. Soon I shall return. I believe deliverance is at hand, near at hand.' He concluded by once more stressing these words: 'Collaboration with traitors will achieve nothing.'

Next day the following proclamation appeared on the walls of Brussels:

'My Fellow-Citizens: ·

The German authorities have just informed me that I must resign office. I have no option but to comply with this order, although it constitutes a clear violation of the Hague Convention and although, in fact, there is no justification for the measure directed against me.

It had been suggested that I should continue to hold office but under such conditions as to implicate me in the execution of the orders of 16th April and 26th May, 1941. These orders were promulgated by a Belgian Authority in violation of the Act of 10th May, 1940, on which the same Authority is basing its claim to exercise power.

Had I consented I should have sacrificed honour and duty, and broken one of the fundamental laws of our country to which I have sworn obedience. Therefore I refused.

Contrary to what is alleged, I neither left my post nor offered my resignation.

I am and shall remain the only legitimate burgomaster of Brussels.

Whatever may be done by any Belgian Authority¹ under the above mentioned Orders is without legal basis.

This is not my last farewell; for I shall be with you again.

In leaving you for the time being, I ask you to endure your wrongs and your sufferings, both material and spiritual, with

¹ See note on page 92.

calm, fortitude, and confidence, and to bear your fate with a brave soul and a proud heart.

There is nothing in this world of which the true members of our race are afraid. They know only one fear, the fear of failing in their duty and of losing their honour.

Remain united, our unity will be our strength and will ensure for us a better future.

God will protect Belgium and her King.

Dr. F. J. de Meulebroeck,
The Burgomaster.

The Town Hall,
30th June, 1941.'

The very same day Dr. van de Meulebroeck was arrested together with the Chief of Police and the official printer who was responsible for publishing the proclamation.

Thus, the Burgomaster of Brussels had acted in the presence of the enemy with a steadfastness and courage worthy of his illustrious predecessor, Adolphe Max. By his bold attitude he has set for all Belgians a shining example of courage, which is the first virtue required in face of an enemy occupation, and to all the patriots subjected to the arbitrary rule of the Nazis and sickened

¹ This refers to the Flemish national-socialist traitor Romsée, appointed by the Germans as Secretary-General to the Ministry of the Interior. Romsée claims that his authority is based on the law of the 10th May, 1940, but the latter is purely administrative and in no way authorizes him to change, without the consent of Parliament which cannot assemble, the laws of the Belgian people. These laws could not possibly be adapted to a German decree contrary to these laws. And the dismissal of the burgomasters, ostensibly because of the age limit, was absolutely contrary to the spirit and letter of the laws and even of the Belgian constitution.

Everything goes to show, moreover, that by adopting these measures the Germans have made a serious mistake. As in 1914 they have under-estimated the attachment of the Belgian people to their local institutions. In his work, *Belgium and the World War*, the great Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, refers in the following terms to similar measures adopted by the Germans during the 1914-18 occupation: 'The proclamations of the Burgomaster of Brussels, M. Adolphe Max, created a stir which was all the greater because these proclamations corresponded to the love of communal independence which forms a part of the traditions of the Belgian people. The example of the capital's chief magistrate showed his colleagues what line to follow. He took his place among the ranks of the martyrs of liberty; among the Artevelde, Egmonts, Annessens, Laruelles, whose legend still fired the popular imagination. Of all the mistakes into which the German military administration was led by its ignorance of the Belgian character, it would be difficult to find one with more disastrous consequences than that which exiled the Burgomaster of Brussels. One would have to go back to the time of the Duke of Alba in order to find armed strength so completely divorced from moral strength.'

It may be said without hesitation that these lines written twenty years ago can be applied with striking aptness to the present situation brought about once more by the arbitrary and tyrannical methods of the Nazi invaders.

by the opportunism of traitors it brought great comfort and stimulated their will to resist. It goes without saying that this heroic conduct was highly esteemed by Belgian circles in England.

In an interview given to the English press the Prime Minister of Belgium, M. Pierlot, described in the following terms his last meeting with the Burgomaster of Brussels before the Government's departure from the capital:

'When the Government left Brussels, on the eve of the entry of the Germans into the capital, I saw M. van de Meulebroeck. I still remember his words and the way in which he spoke: "The Government may rest assured—the Capital is in good hands. From the moment I am faced with the presence of the enemy, I shall adhere strictly to the rules set out in the Hague Convention. The enemy will be able to count on my co-operation so long as he does not overstep the duties imposed on him by the Law of Nations, namely the maintenance of order and the protection of the life and property of the Belgian population. But should the enemy attempt to make me an instrument of his policy he will meet with a most obstinate refusal on my part. I shall know how to set an example worthy of my high office. I have made the sacrifice of my life; I have made it calmly. It is not the first time; I am used to it. I have confidence in myself and I know my courage will not fail me; the enemy will not draw out of me one word or one deed incompatible with duty and honour."

'How moving this last farewell was!' M. Pierlot ended: 'I felt a deep admiration for this man who was about to tread a path beset with the greatest difficulties and dangers, and who rose to the height of heroism as unassumingly as he performed his daily duties.'

So daring a challenge of their authority could not fail to provoke violent reactions on the part of the Germans. The proclamations affixed to the walls of Brussels by order of the Burgomaster were torn down by the German soldiery. But no sooner were they removed than unknown hands replaced them; precautions and arrests did not avail—the placards continued to appear everywhere. In a fit of rage the Germans resolved to strike against the whole population, which in so signal a manner had given proof of solidarity with its Burgomaster. On 1st July the following announcement was posted on the walls of Brussels:

NOTICE

Dr. van de Meulebroeck, who up till now has held the office of Burgomaster of Brussels, must, together with many other Belgian officials and burgomasters, relinquish his post at the

end of June, by virtue of the Decree of 7.3.41 concerning the age limit of Belgian public servants. He has declined to make an application for exemption as provided by the order in question. His resignation of 30.6.41 is, therefore, nothing more than a natural consequence.

Dr. van de Meulebroeck is at present trying by theatrical means to influence public opinion on the subject of his personal case which, however, comes within the scope of a general administrative measure.

In a 'proclamation' posted up at his instance, not only has he decried legally promulgated Belgian decrees but also charged the military authorities with violating the Law of Nations.

The course of action adopted by Dr. van de Meulebroeck, which is dictated by narrow-mindedness and the desire to attract attention to himself, in no way affects the intrinsic legality of the decrees of the military authorities. This attitude and that of his accomplices, however, makes it imperative for the military authorities to take measures to bring to the notice of the public the treasonable activities of these individuals.

For this reason the Military Commander has ordered the immediate arrest of M. van de Meulebroeck, of M. Degries, Chief of the Brussels Police, and of the owner of the Guyot press; the closing down of the latter's premises has also been ordered.

By way of punishment, a fine of 5 million Belgian francs will be imposed on the City of Brussels. It will be levied on the inhabitants in the form of 'van de Meulebroeck tax', according to a scale to be made public at a later date; provision will be made for the poorer sections of the population.

*For the Military Commander of
Belgium and Northern France,
The Chief of Military Administration.*

Brussels, 1st July, 1941.

The text of this proclamation shows clearly that the Germans had every intention of making the people of Brussels collectively responsible for the act of their Burgomaster. In consequence the imposition of a fine of 5 million francs is a fresh violation of the Hague Convention, article 50 of which expressly prohibits collective punishments or fines by way of reprisals for the acts of individuals. The people of Brussels were not slow to show their contempt for this policy of arbitrary conduct and retaliation. The population did not tear down the German proclamations; they replied by flinging small coins on the ground near many of

them. Could a more crushing and contemptuous reply have been conceived?

The movement of protest and resistance to which M. van de Meulebroeck had given a new stimulus was not to be brought to a standstill, and shortly afterwards it was Senator Robert Catteau, Chairman of the Public Education Committee of the Municipality of Brussels, who was put under arrest for his firm opposition to the trickery of the enemy and to the intrigues of the Flemish nationalists. The same week Aldermen Buisseret and Jennissen were dismissed from office in Liège. Thus, throughout the country the town halls have become hotbeds of resistance and of pro-Ally propaganda and the Germans will have to eliminate them one by one at the risk of throwing the whole administrative machinery of the country out of gear.

To-day, silent and unnoticed, a renewed struggle is going on throughout the country. Newspapers in the pay of the enemy, such as *Volk en Staat* and *Le Pays Réel* continually attack the administrative services of the communes. They accused them of becoming more and more inclined to anarchy, and of having in their ranks men who consider sabotage a duty.

In order to strengthen their hold on public offices a German decree of 29th June, 1941, allowed the nomination in populated areas of burgomasters who are not even resident there; and the collaborators, who are always careful to make sure of their 30 pieces of silver, modified art. 3 of the Municipal Code in such a way as to allow governors of provinces to raise the salaries of burgomasters and aldermen. In fact, two months later, it was learned that Romsée, General Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, had taken steps to increase the salaries of burgomasters for the duration of the war to sums ranging from 12,000 to 100,000 francs!

Another political manœuvre carried out rigorously by the enemy is the amalgamation of all the big urban centres. It is obvious that from the point of view of central power, the administrative services of the big towns are more easily controlled by a single body of German-appointed and German-paid traitors than by fifteen or so locally elected bodies. Thus about ten communes in the Antwerp district have been amalgamated into one huge centre composed of 500,000 inhabitants. Similarly a greater Ghent has been created with 300,000 inhabitants, and a greater Liège with 420,000 inhabitants.

The next step in this direction announced by the Germans is the amalgamation of all the communes in the Brussels region into a town of nearly 1,000,000 inhabitants. The Nazis then strengthen

their control by placing *Oberbürgermeister* in every town hall, and make this burgomaster personally responsible for the entire town.

These measures of course did not prevent the resistance of the Municipalities from spreading throughout the country. Yet another proof of this is afforded by the bold declaration, read out in the Council of Aldermen of Verviers on 19th May, 1941, when the Rexist Simon, a nominee of the Germans, took over the office of burgomaster.

It reads as follows:

‘Sir,

In order that there may be no misunderstanding between us, we are of the opinion that plain and unmistakable words are called for.

The Council of Aldermen, which is an expression of popular will and consists of Messrs. Burguet, Gasper, and Tiberghiem, has been convened here to-day to perform a solemn act, which will be recorded in the archives of the city and for which it may one day be called to account before the tribunal of public opinion. Therefore, in order that their words may not be forgotten, the Council makes the following Statement and requests the clerk to set it down in writing.

At the outset, the Council is anxious to recall that it performs its duty in conformity with the Belgian Constitution which states (Section III, article 25) “All powers emanate from the People.” In view of the solemn oath we have taken always to remain loyal to the King and to respect the constitution and laws of the Belgian people, we would be failing seriously in our duty if we were officially to receive here anyone attempting to usurp the municipal power, of which we are the last remaining guardian. Since the King is unable to sanction your nomination, we hold that no legal powers whatever are thereby conferred upon you.

As we are not prepared to compromise ourselves or break solemn vows, the relations between us will remain distant and will be confined solely to the administrative functions which belong to the Council of Aldermen. Each and everyone of us is ready to continue conscientiously to perform the task assigned to him by the rules and regulations in force in the department put in his charge. We will remain faithful guardians of our institutions until such time as the King can once more assume his rights and exercise his supreme judgment on our conduct.

We are not unmindful of the fact that our country is at present subjected to a foreign domination and that the enemy

wields sovereign power since he adheres to the principle that might is right. He imposes upon us new conditions, and plays havoc with our social order and time-honoured traditions. That one can understand. But when some Belgian subjects—we leave it to you to find a name for them—are to be found in our country ready to work for the destruction of the fabric of national unity at this grave hour in which the Nation's trials call for the brotherly co-operation of all its sons, it would be a crime on our part to pledge them our collaboration. We can lose everything but not our honour. It is our firm conviction that in acting as we do, we shall have the overwhelming majority of Belgians behind us. We sincerely believe that even the enemy himself, with whom devotion to his fatherland is both a creed and a moral virtue could feel nothing but contempt for anyone who betrays this sacred duty.

To serve our King and country is, and always will be, our only aim.'

And so, throughout the country, the puppets of the enemy and objects of public contempt will sit alone in empty town halls while faithful citizens visit the private houses of their former burgomasters to hear the news, exchange views, and listen to patriotic words of encouragement and undaunted determination.

CHAPTER 10

The Belgian Population and British Soldiers

ONE of the most disgusting lies circulated by the German propaganda is the statement repeated time and time again by the radio and the enemy controlled press that during the eighteen-day campaign, British troops had brutalized the Belgian population, and that they had distinguished themselves chiefly by acts of destruction as numerous as they were ineffective.

From June, 1940, to October of the same year, never a week went by but the Brussels broadcasting station harped complacently on this theme, describing at great length the feelings of bitterness and hatred which the Belgian public experienced for the English allies. Rome radio even stated on the authority of a 'Roumanian diplomat who had recently returned from Brussels' that the hatred shown for the British was so great in Belgium that if one of them was found by any member of the public he would be put to death immediately.

Now what actually was going on at this time during the summer of 1940? There was more than one Englishman in Belgium, there were even hundreds of them—soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force who had been unable to escape, and who were living with civilians who had shown them the most willing hospitality. To put an end to this state of affairs the German authorities announced that the penalty of death would be inflicted on those persons who offered hospitality. The latter were not deterred by this terrible threat, and for months the Nazi authorities conducted thorough house-to-house searches throughout the entire country, and more particularly in the coastal region.

Sentences, however, continue to be inflicted in great numbers, and in this respect the inhuman oppressors make no distinction between man and woman. On the 7th April, 1941, a German council of war in session at the Brussels Palais de Justice sentenced thirteen Belgians to various punishments for sheltering British soldiers. One man, M. Edgard Lefebvre, and one woman, Madame Marie Guerin, received the death penalty; sentences ranging from one to eight years' imprisonment were inflicted on the other accused people. As soon as this was known in England, Mr. Arthur Francis Aveling, British Charge d'Affaires with the Belgian Government in England, paid a visit to M. Pierlot, the Prime Minister, and conveyed to him on the part of the British people and Government feelings of profound gratitude for the

courageous behaviour of the Belgian patriots. The English newspaper *The Times* wrote in this connection: 'This example of devotion recalls the numerous deeds of courage and self-denial performed by the Belgian population during the last war.'

One can easily imagine how difficult it was to conceal in Belgian territory soldiers who did not know the language of the country. Hunted by enemy police, they constantly had to change their hiding place. And, moreover, the severe rationing system in force in Belgium made the problem of feeding them extremely difficult. But at meetings held by patriots food was collected for the English soldiers, and daring ferry-men offered to repatriate them.

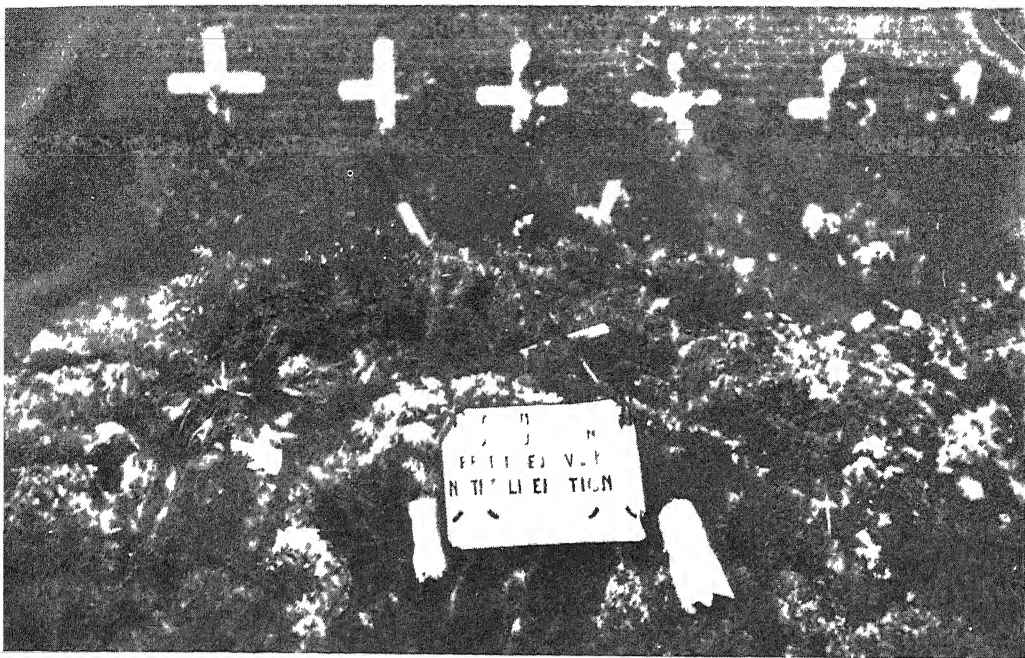
The conditions under which Belgians anxiously followed the memorable phases of the Battle of Britain are worth recording. First of all it must be realized that Belgians followed every stage of this conflict by listening to B.B.C. broadcasts, and that they believed the figures given by the B.B.C., whereas Dr. Goebbels' affirmations only filled them with scepticism and scorn. Every night they heard with grim satisfaction British planes passing over Belgium: according to Belgians, who had escaped from occupied territory, they brought great comfort and did much to avenge all the suffering and humiliation and famine. They were, he said, a real heaven-sent blessing. At the end of August and the beginning of September, 1940, important barge concentrations were assembled in the ports of Ostend, Ghent, and Antwerp: in the huge docks of Antwerp they were especially numerous. To the great satisfaction of the Belgian population the R.A.F. lost no time in bombing these concentrations and in the most effective manner. Soon, about the 15th September, the news circulated throughout the country that hospitals were full of German wounded who were badly burnt all over their bodies. The German authorities literally raided stocks of pharmaceutical goods and requisitioned all the tannic acid, which is used for treating burns. They even had to house the wounded in the hospital attached to the university of Brussels: nurses and doctors were severely over-worked: then the good news spread like wild-fire—the Germans had tried to invade England and had been repulsed under conditions which had been especially painful for the attackers. During the following days many German planes were reported lost, and this helped to strengthen the feeling that the greatest danger had passed, and that the struggle was far from drawing to a close.

The population had a friendly attitude towards English airmen flying over Belgian territory. During the month of August, 1940, the Nazis imagined they could incite the Belgian people to feel

resentment for the R.A.F. by acting in the same manner as they had often done in Holland. Therefore during the night of the 15th August several bombs were released over the centre of Brussels, destroying houses and killing a number of people. But as we have shown on page 23, this shameful stratagem of war was not successful, and before the end of that same month inhabitants of Brussels were sentenced by German tribunals for having said that the Nazis had intentionally bombed the town. And, furthermore, it was soon learnt from news coming from a very reliable source, that when a British plane was forced to land in occupied territory Belgians immediately set out to find members of the crew, taking with them civilian clothing which would help them to escape.

But this new form of help, so freely given by the population, was not practised without the most serious risks. For instance, the Fraipont family, living in Liège, and consisting of the father aged 70, the mother aged 68, and a daughter, were all condemned to death for having harboured for a month a British airman whose plane had been brought down near Maeseyck. At the time of this iniquitous sentence the *Brüsseler Zeitung* did not fail to remind the numerous Belgians who helped British pilots that by so doing they were liable to the death penalty. And of course, retaliatory measures followed these threats. Shortly afterwards Messrs. Overmans, aged 73, and Graifkens, aged 69, were condemned to death at Brussels for having given civilian clothing and food to a British pilot. They were executed with three other Belgians accused of spying. Since then five other Belgians have been executed in Liège for helping British soldiers. The population even went as far as to help R.A.F. pilots forced down on Belgian soil to destroy their machines. The Germans issued a decree on this subject saying that when an R.A.F. plane was brought down the matter should be reported immediately with details of the time and place. The 'noble-hearted protectors' even went as far as to promise a reward of 240 francs for such information. But the Belgian people knew how to reply to this despicable behaviour. Shortly after the publication of the German decree a British plane was forced down near Bressoux (in the Liège province): the population rushed at once to the help of the pilots. One of the crew was safe and sound, so civilian clothes were immediately found for him, and he was thus able to dodge the German police. But his comrade was dead. He was given an elaborate and moving funeral. The young hero's coffin was buried in flowers, and on a huge wreath was written one single word "Thanks".

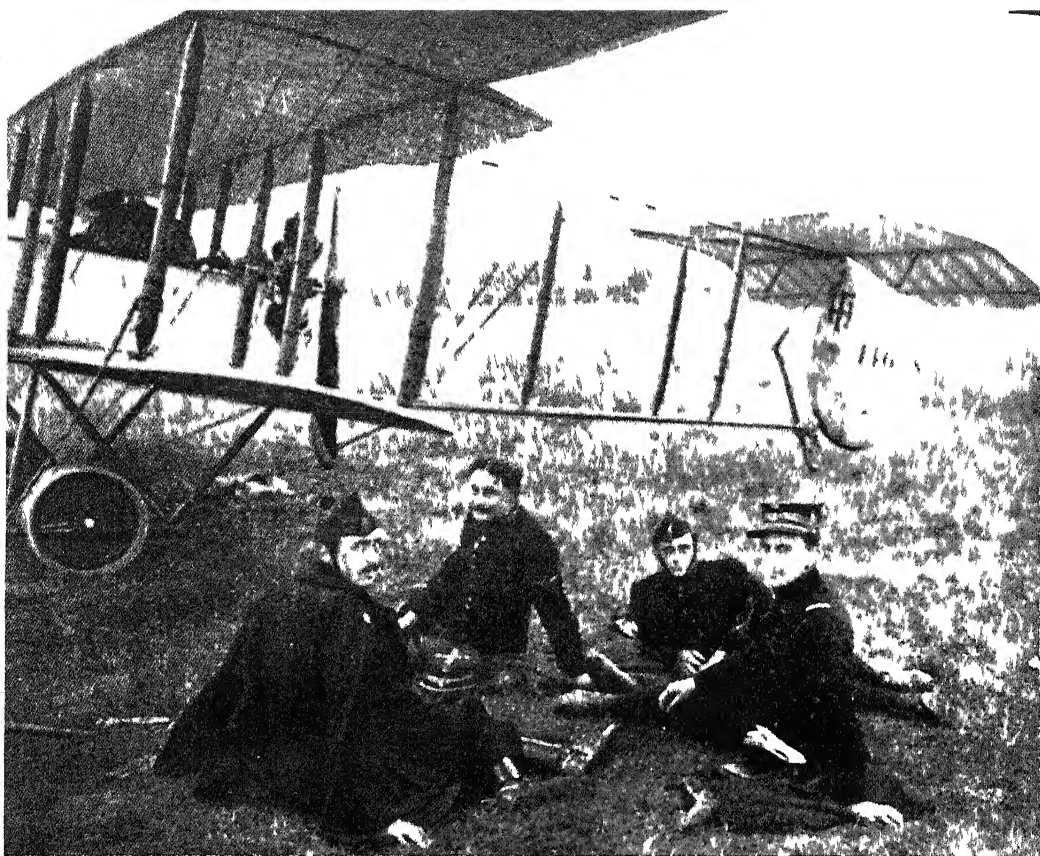
Recently six British airmen met their death during the course



Flowers placed by Belgians on the graves of British Airmen. (On the ribbon in the middle are the words "Our gratitude to those who have offered their lives for our freedom.")



Belgian crowd at the funeral of British Airmen. It will be noticed that a number of people are making the V sign.



1914 Belgian reconnaissance plane used during the 1914 campaign

1941 Belgian Airmen in Great Britain



of an engagement in which four German planes were brought down near Wavre. In spite of German orders an immense crowd attended the funeral service of the British victims. Masses of flowers came from all parts, and on the graves a cross bearing this daring inscription was placed: 'In gratitude to those who have given their lives for our liberation.' A little later an R.A.F. plane was brought down by the anti-aircraft guns near Gembloux. All members of the crew were killed. On the day they were buried all the shops were shut and the crowd pressed closely behind the students of the Agricultural Institute who were lining the streets. Behind the coffins of the airmen a large crown was carried; on it was a ribbon bearing the inscription 'to our heroes'.

Very often these demonstrations of pity exasperate the Germans, who fire blank cartridges at the crowd, as they did at Liège and at Wavre to disperse the demonstrators.

The Nazis soon became more and more enraged by the courage of the population. Therefore, during September, 1941, a Brussels military court did not hesitate to condemn a Belgian woman to eight years' imprisonment for having helped a British soldier and for having circulated B.B.C. news. Soon the punishments which they inflicted became more and more severe. According to the terms of a decree, published in November, 1941, by the German authorities, the death penalty can be inflicted on those who hide or admit into their homes any escaped prisoners of war, or members of the forces of any country at war with Germany.

The presence of British soldiers and airmen in Belgium had already been the subject of many decrees issued since the beginning of the German occupation. But the threat concerning prisoners of war represents a new measure.

The devoted care and reverence with which the Belgian people tended the British soldiers' graves were shared by all sections of the community. Although the Imperial War Graves Commission was no longer able to attend to the British graves of the 1914-18 war, its duties were everywhere performed by local authorities and inhabitants who took it upon themselves to look after the cemeteries. We have described in another chapter the eagerness with which the people of Brussels brought flowers to the monument dedicated to the British soldiers who fell during the last war. At the feet of the four soldiers who form the frieze on the front of the monument a carpet of flowers was renewed every day until the Germans forbade these touching and pious tributes. But from then on brave patriots used to bring their flowers under cover of darkness.

In all the districts where fighting took place during the month of May, 1940, there are graves of British soldiers, and every

Sunday, the same groups of people gather around them—priests, women, and young girls who have made it their duty to look after them until that long awaited day when they will be put again into the care of British hands.

Such are the real feelings of the Belgian people with regard to British soldiers. The foul libels spread by the Nazis were flatly disproved by actual events, and were of no avail against the faith and affections of a people determined to remain true to old friendships. For their former and present allies, for the soldiers fighting for the world's freedom, their feelings run in one direction only: they admire, they are confident, they lend assistance and give material help even at the cost of their lives. For the dead heroes they offer the daily tribute of silent and sorrowful reverence.

CHAPTER II

The Belgian Government in London

AFTER the Franco-German armistice, the Belgian Ministers came to London. M. Albert de Vleeschauwer, Minister of Colonies, to whom the administration of the Belgian Congo has been entrusted, arrived here in July, and M. Gutt, Minister of Finance, whose task it was to supervise the important gold credits Belgium possessed abroad, took up residence in August, 1940. But M. Pierlot, Prime Minister, and M. Spaak, Minister of Foreign Affairs, could not get to London before October. In fact, they had the greatest difficulty in getting out of France as the German pressure on the Vichy Government was growing daily. To get across Spain proved much more arduous still. Although that country and Belgium had never been at war and diplomatic relations had always been friendly, the Belgian Ministers were detained in a hotel and put under police supervision. This once again was due to the interference of the Gestapo and the Rome wireless repeatedly announced with obvious pleasure that 'two former Belgian Ministers had attempted to escape from France but had failed'. Under the circumstances, MM. Pierlot and Spaak decided to make a get-away at all costs and reach England as soon as possible.

After several weeks of preliminaries, they succeeded in getting across Spain and Portugal without breaking their journey, and eventually reached London.

Here they found thousands of refugees, the great majority of whom, except for the fishermen and diamond-cutters, had not so far been absorbed in the war effort. There were hundreds of civil servants without employment and there were soldiers—volunteers and regulars—who wished to be reorganized and were eager to fight: they required officers and arms.

With the untiring help of its diplomatic and consular services, the Belgian Embassy in London had done its utmost to meet the really grave situation; so too had the Belgian Parliamentary Office, presided over by M. Camille Huysmans. It had been largely responsible for finding employment for the Belgian workers.

The Ministers allotted themselves the following functions:

M. PIERLOT, Prime Minister, took charge of the Ministry of Education and the Refugees' Bureau.

M. P. H. SPAAK, Minister of Foreign Affairs, added to his

functions those of the Ministry of Labour as well as those of President of the Bureau for Information.

M. GUTT, Minister of Finance, took on the functions of Minister of Economic Affairs and Minister of National Defence.

M. A. DE VLEESCHAUWER, Minister of Colonies, also undertook the administration of the Ministry of Justice.

Since then the Belgian Government has been increased by three Under-Secretaries of State: M. Rolin, Senator, Professor at the University of Brussels, who escaped from occupied territory; M. Joassart, an important industrialist from Liège, who also escaped from Belgium, and M. Hoste, former minister who was one of the first Belgian political personalities to arrive in England in June, 1940.

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The task which awaited the Belgian Ministers in London was enormous. Without delay the reorganization and equipment of the Belgian Forces in Great Britain had to be attended to. This was Belgium's duty of good-fellowship towards her English Allies which could brook no further delay.

One had to act quickly at a time when experienced officers and modern weapons were hard to find. One also had to endeavour to improve the lot of tens of thousands of refugees, most of whom came to Great Britain without clothes or means. Thousands were without work and their predicament became even more tragic through the horrors of the 'Blitz'. Likewise, help to the prisoners of war in Germany had to be increased. The interests and well-being of the three thousand sailors and merchantmen who were daily risking their lives to bring across the seas food, munitions, and weapons of all kinds necessary to continue the struggle, had to be looked after. Besides all this there were important Belgian economic interests to defend in free territories; measures had to be taken so that these could not serve the purpose of the invader of the country. The collaboration of the Congo in the struggle, too, had to be strengthened; its considerable wealth put at the disposal of the Allies, the territorial forces put on a war basis and prepared for an offensive campaign. Finally, during daily bombing, it was essential to organize in London the necessary ministerial services, rally the available Belgian Forces, and group all energies under the national standard.

All this had to be done in the absence of Parliamentary control: also the publication of budgets had to be arranged for and a strict accountancy of the State organized. What has been

done in all these different spheres within only eighteen months is worth retelling. The brief description which we will give here clearly shows that the essential interests of the country have been effectively defended.

Belgium's Foreign Policy

One of the most urgent problems to be settled as soon as the Belgian Government had taken up its quarters in London was that dealing with Belgium's relations with Italy.

On the 10th June, 1940, when Italy had declared war on France and England, she had confined herself to breaking off diplomatic relations with Belgium. But since that date she had shown an utter lack of consideration for that country. Through the agency of the armistice commission she had ordered Belgian transport planes belonging to the S.A.B.E.N.A. to be detained at Algerian aerodromes—and had simply taken possession of them without making any attempt to justify her action. In Brussels Italian squadrons occupied the aerodrome at Evere, and used it as a base for their fruitless attempts at bombing London—an action which had no justification seeing that Belgium was not at war with Italy. In the Congo the attitude of the Italian colony had been particularly insolent; they took note of everything in anticipation of the day when the troops of the Duke of Aosta, Viceroy of Abyssinia, should march into Leopoldville.

But the torpedoing of the steamship *Kabalo* by an Italian submarine was the last straw. On the 29th November, 1940, the Belgian Government announced that in view of these acts of hostility Belgium intended in future to put her relationship with Italy on a similar basis. This was tantamount to an official declaration of war, and soon the colonial troops, who took part in the Abyssinian campaign, proved that they were not afraid of the blustering threats of the Black Shirts.

As an ally of Great Britain, Belgium followed the policy adopted conjointly with her concerning the countries which had adhered to the anti-commintern pact, and which had given their allegiance to the tripartite pact. She broke off diplomatic relations with Roumania and Bulgaria, although she had considerable material interests in both these countries. She furthermore recognized the provisional Czech Government under Dr. Benes, and friendly diplomatic relations were established between the two governments.

Belgium was represented at the two historic meetings of the

Allied Powers held on the 12th June and the 24th September, 1941, at St. James's Palace in London. She declared war on Japan in December, 1941, and was a signatory to the Grand Alliance of Washington.

To sum up, it can be said that the Belgian Government in London continues to be recognized by all free nations as Belgium's only legal Government. This Government has only broken off relations with countries under the Rome-Berlin Axis—that is to say Finland, Denmark, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Roumania. The breaking off of diplomatic relations with Spain was due to an accident which the Nazis tried to turn to their own advantage. As for the Vichy Government, considering the century-old friendship which existed between Belgium and France, the Belgian Government persists in believing, for the sake of the honour of France, that Vichy's attitude to the Governments of Allied nations is simply due to German pressure.

Outside Europe, the Belgian Government has never ceased to have the most cordial relations with the Chinese Government under Chiang Kai-shek.

Thus all free nations continue to recognize the principle that a State whose national territory is entirely occupied by the enemy can continue to live. Bombs and torpedoes cannot kill a state. A state is immortal as long as it embodies the will of the people, even if a foreign oppressor prevents that will from being publicly expressed.

The Belgian Army in Britain

From the moment that Belgium proclaimed her willingness to continue the fight at England's side, one of the most pressing problems with which the Belgian Government was faced was to call to the colours the Belgian citizens who were in the unoccupied territories. It would be inconceivable not to conscript Belgian citizens when their English Allies were calling up the men of 41 years of age. The calling-up of Belgians was decided by a decree of 3rd December, 1940.

To-day the Belgian Army in England has in its ranks men who succeeded in rejoining it under the most varied and extraordinary circumstances. Gathered around a small group of officers and men who escaped from Belgium after the capitulation of 28th May, and from France after the armistice of 18th June, are volunteers from the recruiting reserve in France, as well as those coming from occupied countries.

Out of a population of 8,400,000, 600,000 men were mobilized on 10th May, which showed as high a percentage as that of France or Germany. In spite of this all those liable for military service, comprising men from 17 to 35 years of age, who had, as yet, not been called up, received the order to leave the country and thus to escape from the clutches of the invader. Also nearly 200,000 men, for the most part young men, had fled into France. This formidable migration was one of the most moving examples of the Belgians' will to continue their resistance. Begun with enthusiasm, this resistance was in spite of all the set-backs carried through with courage, and until the day France capitulated these men, with one accord, had the firm intention of taking up the arms which had been torn from the hands of their fellow-countrymen. These young men first joined forces in the West of Belgium, and from there moved to the North of France, and with the German army ever on their heels went on to Brittany, Bordeaux, and Toulouse until they reached the foot of the Pyrenees. Thousands covered more than 750 miles on foot or by bicycle under the hail of machine-gun fire from pursuing German aircraft. The majority of them were without money or luggage, and sheltered in barns, schools, and rest centres. They accomplished this rough journey with indomitable courage and overcame its discomforts with youthful recklessness. Thus there were, even after the capitulation of the Army, nearly 200,000 men with a strong determination to re-form the Belgian Army, and who would have fought with ferocious tenacity had they not been prevented by the fall of France. Alas! most of them had to return sadly to their enemy-occupied territory escorted by the Vichy police and German sentries. But some of them who had money, finding themselves near a port, or favoured by circumstances, were able to escape from France to Spain, Portugal, or Gibraltar, or in some cases by sea to Morocco or the Congo. After journeys full of incidents of all kinds—in cargo ships packed with refugees, or in more dangerous craft—braving the furies of nature and the forces of the enemy, they were ultimately able, after suffering terrible privations with great courage, to reach the shores of England.

But even greater is the bravery of those heroic ones who are to-day leaving their oppressed homesteads and setting out to rejoin the country's army.

Their task is indeed hazardous, for they must surmount difficulties of every sort. Firstly, to cross the Belgian frontier into Northern France they must evade the surveillance of the German police; then to leave the prohibited area they must again run the gauntlet of a military cordon. On arriving in occupied France an

even greater task awaits them, that of crossing the line of demarcation between the occupied and unoccupied zones. This is strictly guarded by the occupation authorities, and sentries have orders to use their arms against anyone attempting to cross the border. To overcome these new dangers they are able to rely on the help of the French people, but they must at all costs guard against any contact with the Vichy police who would, without mercy, hand them over to the Nazis should they be arrested. But whenever they have been in need they have never failed to get support of a most generous kind from a people speaking the same language and suffering under the same oppressors. After they have safely negotiated the journey across France they must cross the Pyrenees, in most cases without guides, with only rough maps or compasses, hiding during the day and walking throughout the night. On arriving on Spanish soil they find themselves without papers or passports, among a people who do not speak their language, hunted by a police controlled by the Gestapo, who would, if they arrested them, take them to Hendaye where they would be thrown into prison and kept there for months, under the most filthy and primitive conditions. Hundreds of our young men were arrested and actually found themselves in Spanish prisons. But in spite of all this, by iron determination, by hiding on railway trucks, or journeying on foot by circuitous routes for 25 to 45 miles a day, they were at last able to reach the Portuguese frontier. From this moment they took new heart and were infused with a new strength knowing that even if arrested by the police, they would not be conducted from frontier to frontier to the portals of a Nazi prison. But what do a few weeks or even months in prison matter, so long as they are able to resume their journey! However, the adventure is not yet finished. They have to wait several weeks before they can embark from Lisbon, to start their journey to Gibraltar, and after many long days at sea they are greeted by that long-awaited sight—the shores of free England.

Many other Belgian citizens from the far corners of the world have travelled tens of thousands of miles to obey their country's call to join the Belgian Army in England. Coming from the Argentine, China, Uruguay, and the Dutch East Indies, waiting many weeks in ports to be convoyed, undergoing the strangest adventures, sailing from the Congo to England via Canada, or from Aden to Liverpool via America, all these men, sons of one country, lost in the distant horizons of the world, have shown the same determination and courage to range themselves at the side of those already fighting for freedom. Officers of the militia coming from America have had to wait many months on the shores of Africa before

finally reaching Great Britain! Soldiers travelled from Brussels via Mexico, the United States of America, and Canada, before arriving in London. But in spite of the chaos, due to war conditions, and the dangers of the high seas, every month, every week sees an ever-increasing number of newcomers to our ranks—those who have journeyed from afar to avenge their country's humiliation.

This feeling among the Belgian youth is so deep and so strong that the German authorities have been obliged to promulgate the following barbaric decree: 'By the right invested in me by the Commander in Chief of the Army, I issue the following order to Belgium and the North of France:—Anyone attempting to join an Army of a country now at war with Germany or attempting to take part in that war, and also any person inciting another person to a similar act, will be condemned to death; in exceptional cases to forced labour.

(Signed) General von Falkenhausen'

So, from a Nazi pen, comes an order which even the Kaiser would never have dared to give in the last war: Officers, soldiers, patriots, trying to rejoin their country's army threatened with the penalty of death!

The Belgian air force certainly played a glorious part during the eighteen-day campaign (10th–28th May, 1940). From the very beginning of the invasion, it entered into a desperate struggle with the *Luftwaffe* which had overwhelming superiority both in men and aircraft. Some Belgian airmen even went so far as to attack German formations twenty times superior to them in numbers; they paid dearly for the sacrifice which they had so readily made. Others unhesitatingly undertook veritable suicidal missions. For example, a squadron of twelve Fairey Battles, in spite of intense opposition, attacked the bridges of the Albert canal; only two machines escaped. During the campaign the Belgian air force was twice mentioned in Army dispatches by King Leopold. They paid dearly for this honour, because on the 27th May, out of the three squadrons, not more than 10 machines remained.

After the French Armistice of the 17th June, Belgian airmen who were in France crossed over to Great Britain and joined the R.A.F. During the Battle of Britain, 14 Belgian pilots in the Fighter Command won distinction by bringing down 27 German planes for the loss of 6 of theirs. Of the 14 airmen who were serving in the Coastal Command, one was killed during this battle in an operation off the French coast. Since then the number of Belgian airmen in Great Britain has been considerably increased, and those engaged in Coastal Command operations can claim that their

victories and losses are in proportion of 3 to 1. The Belgian air force has also taken part in operations in the Mediterranean, in Crete, and Libya. Other airmen help to patrol the coast, to protect convoys, and to make reconnaissance flights in the Atlantic. They have taken part in the offensive sweeps over Germany, and have won distinction in raids over the Belgian and Dutch coasts. And now they have become expert night-fighters.

On the 12th February, 1941, a moving ceremony took place at an aerodrome in the London region. M. Gutt, Minister of National Defence, handed over to a Belgian fighter squadron the standard belonging to the Belgian air force which was brought back to England by a Belgian officer who had crossed over to occupied territory to seek it. This flag, which had been hidden after the capitulation of the Army, is once more flying in a free country, a striking symbol of Belgium's heroic air force.

The prowess of the Belgian airmen, brought to the notice of the inhabitants of occupied countries through the medium of *Radio-Belgique*, has caused great enthusiasm. *La Libre Belgique*, a newspaper secretly printed in Brussels, has on many occasions expressed sentiments of admiration and gratitude to our compatriots. A new and clear proof of this growing admiration is that a weekly publication *Cassandre*, which is under German control, accuses numbers of teachers and professors of encouraging young men to join the Belgian Army. Tremendous encouragement was given to all those youths so anxious to serve by the exploits of two airmen who, one night at the end of June, 1941, left Belgium in an aircraft equipped with very makeshift instruments, but nevertheless boldly and proudly marked with the Belgian national emblem. On their arrival in England it was seen that they were armed and in uniform! Had they been shot down over occupied territory and taken prisoner, their fate would have been certain death. The patriotic symbolism of that heroic adventure was made greater by the fact that they brought with them the text of the proclamation of M. Van de Meulebroeck, burgomaster of Brussels, protesting against the illegal actions of the Germans.

The Navy

Of all the Belgian forces put at the service of the Allies, the Merchant Navy has suffered the greatest losses. Of a total tonnage of approximately 420,000 tons carried by Belgian ships on the 10th May, 1940, only 220,000 tons were left in the month of December, 1941: 34 merchant ships were sunk and only 54 remained afloat.

These considerable losses can be explained by the fact that Belgium's Merchant Navy has been attacked by German aircraft and submarines ever since the morning of 10th May, from the moment the port of Antwerp was attacked. Soon after, a large portion of the ships, transporting troops and refugees, put in at French ports. But once again they had to run the gauntlet of German bombs in order to reach English ports. Since July, 1940, all sea-going ships sailing under Belgian colours have been without hesitation put at the service of the common cause, and have not ceased sailing in the danger zones.¹

More than 200 trawlers and fishing boats found refuge in England in May, 1940, and since then have continued their work without flinching at the danger of mines, or torpedoes, and aeroplanes. All the calm courage and stoic determination which lie behind a mere narration of events can only be told when peace is once more established on land and sea. Mr. Aveling, Chargé d'Affaires of Great Britain with the Belgian Government in London, in honour of the presentation of medals of the British Empire to officers and men of the Merchant Navy and of the Belgian fishing fleet, revealed that in the evacuation of Dunkirk the Belgian Steamship *Julia* embarked 1,007 men, the trawlers *Guido Gezelle* 403, *Cor Jesu* 274, and *Marshal Foch* approximately 300. The sailors who composed the ships' crews, immediately answered the call made to refugee Belgian navigators at a moment when the capitulation of the 28th May called forth a series of bitter comments on the attitude taken by their fellow-countrymen.

More than 100 light boats fighting under the Belgian flag have been put at the disposal of the Royal Navy to act as Auxiliaries.

Several English coastal villages and several Welsh ports are partly inhabited by hundreds of Flemish fishing families who have come from the shores of Belgium. The spirit of these brave people is imbued with that sense of solidarity which exists between all Allied seamen.

Many survivors from the torpedoings and bombing attacks of the enemy have been saved by our fishermen. In May, 1941, the captain of a Belgian fishing boat 0,287 *Ixious* saved more than sixty men from an English warship which was on fire, by boarding the vessel whilst it was burning like a torch.

The list of names inscribed on the roll of honour of the golden book of Belgian seamanship is far from complete.

The latest contribution made by her seafaring people to the

¹ All the Belgian vessels fly the Belgian flag and carry Belgian crews; there are more than 2,000 Belgian sailors constantly at sea.

cause of Belgium is by no means the least: I mean the creation of a Belgian section of the 'Royal Navy' which already numbers several hundred young men.

The revue 'Marine' founded by the department of Communications for the use of our sailors, tells us in this connection: 'Conscripted Belgians can be freed from military service, on condition that before joining the Army, they decide to give their services to the Belgian Section of the "Royal Navy."'

After a few weeks training on land, whole contingents of recruits are placed on board the same warship. Thus they remain in a Belgian atmosphere during the time they spend with the Navy, but at the same time they derive benefit from the teachings of the Royal Navy and are subject to its laws and traditions. According to the knowledge and the certificates they possess, the best of them are trained for special posts; signallers, wireless operators; they have the chance of becoming petty officers and even officers. Many of our officers are already acting lieutenants of the R.N.V.R.

Even recently a Belgian corvette to be manned by a Belgian crew was launched from a port in the North of England.

It is of course no mean cause for pride for Belgian youths to be able to serve as sailors and officers in the most famous navy in the world. Therefore, they carry out their duties extremely conscientiously. During a recent visit to a Belgian training centre, Mr. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, was struck by their bearing and enthusiasm and congratulated them publicly.

Belgium's courageous seamen, anxious to play their part in the liberation of their country, were daunted neither by danger nor hardships. Belgian sailors have deserved well of their country.

Mobilization of Belgian Labour

The 23,000 Belgian civilians living in Britain to-day constitute the largest allied colony in the United Kingdom.

Most of the Belgian refugees arrived in England in May and June, 1940. They immediately set about looking for work and those who were capable of doing so were, with the permission of the Ministry of Labour, authorized to take up employment.

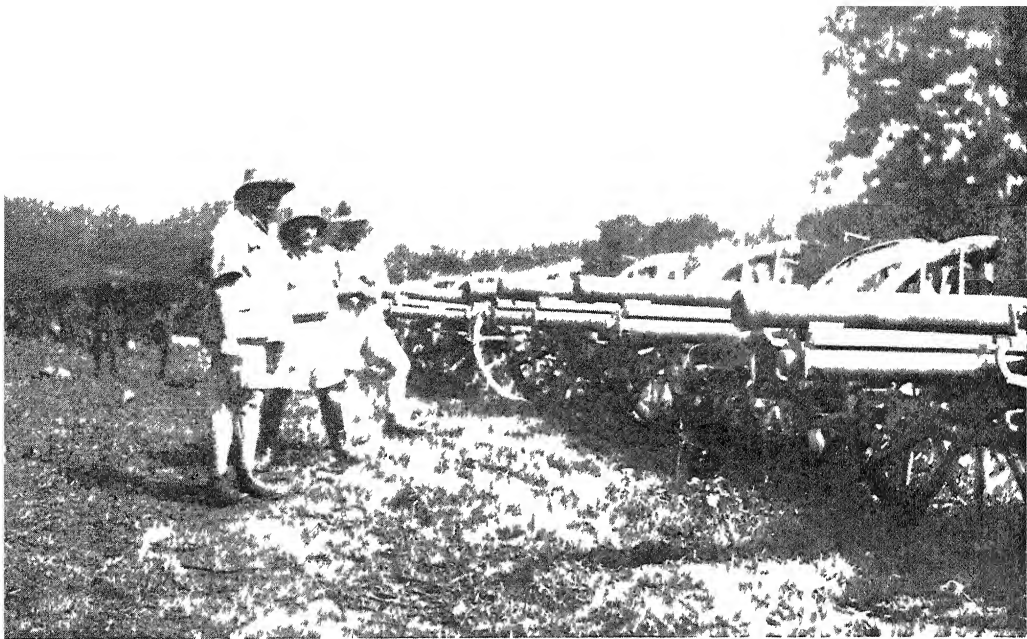
Thanks to the initiative taken by M. C. Huysmans, Burgomaster of Antwerp, in collaboration with the Diamond Corporation and the Diamond Trading Company, refugees who belonged to the diamond industry were very quickly given employment. Soon the Belgian diamond cutters were able to make an important contribution to the war effort by cutting diamonds which are sold to U.S.A.,



Entry of German troops into Brussels The Burgomaster Dr van de Meulebroeck and German officers in front of the Hotel de Ville

The Belgian Government in London *From left to right*: M de Vlceschauwer (Minister of Colonies), M Pierlot (Prime Minister), M Gutt (Minister of National Defence), M Spaak (Minister of Foreign Affairs)





Italian guns captured by the Belgian Colonial troops in March, 1941

Material captured from the Italians in Abyssinia by the Belgian Colonial Army



and thus ensuring for Great Britain a regular flow of foreign exchange stock.

On the 28th November, 1940, a Cabinet decree created the Ministry of Labour and State Insurance, whose functions were to see that in civil life the Belgian colony offered a complete contribution to the British industrial war effort, and to look after the social and material well-being of those Belgian citizens who had undertaken this duty. M. Paul Henry Spaak, Minister of Foreign Affairs, assumed the management of this department.

The first thing to be done was to carry out a professional census of the Belgian refugees. A decree issued by the British Government in agreement with the Belgian Government enabled this operation to be carried out successfully: the registration was extended to men refugees between the ages of 16 and 65 and to women between the ages of 16 and 50.

To facilitate finding employment for those whose professional qualifications did not fit them for the work available or whose ignorance of the English language handicapped their chances of finding work, employment exchanges were organized; these fulfilled a real need, and enjoyed considerable success. Courses lasting six-months were established; at the end of this period the Anglo-Belgian Labour Exchange took upon itself to place those who had greatly profited by these courses. Sixty per cent of those Belgians who attended the first session have now already found posts.

The striking results obtained by the Anglo-Belgian Labour Exchange can be summed up with the following figures:—90 per cent of the men seeking employment and who were registered with the Exchange have found situations. Forty per cent of the women seeking employment and who were registered with the Exchange have found situations.

As far as the women are concerned, the situation is rapidly improving; during recent months the percentage of women who have found employment equals that of men.

Economic and Financial Measures

In October, 1940, it became obvious that the prosecution of Belgium's economic interests should be undertaken without delay and in a most vigorous manner.

The Belgian loans on the London Stock Exchange were at the lowest quotation (39 per cent of the nominal value for the 1936 loan at 4 per cent); an important portion of the gold-deposits of

the National Bank had been unduly retained by the French Government and were about to be handed over to Germany. The occupier used pressure on colonial societies as well as on those societies having possessions abroad in order to recover the profits of these in occupied territory through the mediation of neutral banks; considerable quantities of goods belonging to Belgians were scattered all over the world and in danger of being seized by foreign Governments, and in Belgium inquisitorial proceedings were made to deprive certain classes of their citizenship.

To meet this situation a number of measures were taken by M. Gutt, Minister of Finance. Among the first were those aimed at strengthening the country's credit. In October, 1940, the Government informed the holders of the $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent bonds which fell due on 29th May, 1940, that it had been decided to repay these, both capital and interest, on 29th November 1940: this reimbursement was made in English currency at the rate of 123 Belgian francs for £1 sterling. As to the bonds which were in occupied territories, they would be deferred every four months until the liberation of the country. On the other hand, the regular service for foreign loans was restarted in London, the loans being specified in dollars. Measures were, however, taken to avoid payments being made to occupied countries; on the other hand, the announcement of the agreement between Great Britain and the Belgian Government settling the value of the Congolese francs against the sterling, raised the stocks held by the Belgian State quoted on the London Stock Exchange. In fact, the returns in sterling which this agreement secured for the Belgian Government, were adequate to ensure the loan service.

The 4 per cent 1936 loan, which was quoted at 32 in October, 1940, rose to 59 in February, 1941, and to 83 in September, 1941. Even the English Press was amazed that a loan of a country occupied by the enemy was so eagerly sought by purchasers.

Measures, too, were taken to recover the equivalent of the gold handed over to Germany by the complacency of the Vichy Government. The Belgian Government repeatedly insisted on this and finally on 18th June at Bordeaux it was requested that the ship which sailed from Lorient having on board the 65 million pounds sterling of Belgian gold should be convoyed under the care of the British Admiralty to a port in the United Kingdom. No reply was given to this request and for several weeks it was thought that the ship had been sunk by a German bomber. Presently it was learned that the ship was at Dakar and the gold unloaded.

The Belgian Government protested vigorously that this gold

did not belong to France and insisted once more that it should be sent to the British Empire or the United States. These protests were of no avail and at the Armistice Commission of Wiesbaden, France made an agreement with Germany to hand over the gold which had been entrusted to her by a friendly nation. Although the difficult situation of the Vichy Government is well known, this action constituted a flagrant violation of the Belgian Government's confidence. Therefore, it was decided to seize the gold totalling 260 million dollars belonging to the Banque de France and deposited at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. By a resolution dated 5th February, 1941, the New York Tribunal authorized this attachment which was carried out the very next day.

A communiqué by the Minister of Finance, M. Gutt, stated that the action had been brought by M. Theunis acting as Governor of the National bank of Belgium. It should be noted in fact that by virtue of a Belgian law the directors of the National Bank in Belgium are not allowed to pass any resolutions concerning credit abroad, because they are invalid, this authority only appertaining to those directors residing in unoccupied territory. This prophetic law had been voted in February, 1940; its purpose was to contribute largely to safeguard the Belgian credits in the Congo and abroad. The Belgian National Bank thus instituted legal proceedings against the Bank of France, who called upon various exceptions of procedure, of which the most important consisted of denying the competence of the American Tribunals. Nevertheless the Courts in New York rejected the exceptions put forward by the Bank of France and on 8th August, 1941 declared itself competent.

It can be seen, therefore, that the Belgian State bears all its own expenses and does not depend financially on any of its Allies for its expenditure, not even for the equipment of the Army¹.

On the contrary, the Government has made very important contributions towards the common war effort, such as the gift of £100,000 made to the Spitfire fund by M. Gutt, Minister of Finance, acting in the name of the Belgian Government. In financial matters just as in all others, the support given by the Belgian Government to the Allied cause has been without stint or reservation.

The Colony

The white population of the Belgian Congo learned with indignation of the unspeakable aggression committed on 10th May, 1940,

¹ For example, the officers, pilots, and Belgian volunteers in the R.A.F. are all paid by the Belgian Government and the planes in which they fly are purchased by the Belgian Government.

against the Mother Country. Accounts of the misfortunes of the Allies in Belgium, followed by the capitulation on 28th May in no way softened their feelings towards the invader. All Belgian colonists were in favour of continuing the struggle at the side of England, and on several occasions expressed their feelings with conviction and vigour. The speech made by M. Rijckmans, the Governor-General of the Congo, on 21st July, 1940, faithfully translates the feelings of the Belgians in Africa. He said: 'This determination to fight, this will to conquer, is shared by all Belgians residing in the Congo. It is indeed hard on them to be so far away from the struggle, to be free from danger when so many face aerial bombardments, to suffer no hardship, while in the Fatherland Belgians are hungry. To give their surplus does not satisfy their need for self-sacrifice; they too would like to suffer, they want action.' The Governor-General had to deal with an anxious and restless people: the confused situation in which the Allies found themselves owing to the demand for an Armistice in France, the absence of news from Europe, the menace from the Italian armies in Abyssinia which made itself felt all along the Kenya border, roused angry comments. The will to resist the triumphant aggression was supported by all and the Governor-General described it in these terms: 'The Government has only one aim: to win the war, to liberate Belgium and restore to her a Congo intact, capable of contributing to the rebuilding of the country. To win the war, means, of course, helping Great Britain to win it.'

These feelings of anger and this eagerness to fight were also shared by the natives. One of their representatives, after hearing about the German bombardment of Belgium, stated at the Ministry of Colonies: 'If that is the way Hitler treats the white people, what can we expect if he is victorious'.

When news came of the decision taken in London by the Government to declare Belgium at war with Italy, it was received with great enthusiasm. The recollection of the glorious campaign in German East Africa was still living in everyone's memory and fired the imagination of the inhabitants. The Territorial Army had been mobilized, their numbers were great but they lacked arms. Certain orders which were issued in Belgium naturally could not be executed, others had to be prepared owing to lessons learned during the European campaign. So the Minister for the Colonies, M. Albert de Vleeschauwer, decided to go to the Congo and co-ordinate the efforts of the Colony, together with those of South Africa and the territories under British mandate surrounding the Colony. Before long the first Belgian contingent would be able to reach the front, and contact the armed forces of General Wavell. This energetic

attitude taken by the Belgian Congo, moreover, provoked the usual outbursts from German leaders who attacked without scruple or restraint, through the press in their pay and over the Brussels wireless, the Governor-General, M. Rijckmans.

These attacks had no influence whatsoever on the Belgian colonials, and when M. de Vleeschauwer during an interview at Leopoldville, announced that the Congolese armies would leave for the front he was greeted with great enthusiasm. As soon as they had fought their first successful action at Asosa against the Italians, they received General Wavell's congratulations, which were addressed to General Ermens, commanding the Belgian Colonial Forces.

Soon we learned that the British and Belgian troops continued their advance into Abyssinia beyond Gambela. This important locality was captured after our troops had travelled over 200 km. Hostilities lasted all through the day on 22nd March, 1941; the Italians were strongly entrenched and had at their disposal numerous automatic weapons. Fresh Belgian Colonial troops were brought up and our effectives in Abyssinia were considerably increased. One of the most important successes obtained by the Belgian Colonial Forces was that of 3rd July, 1941, when General Cassera, commanding the Italian troops of Galla Sidano, asked by wireless for an armistice and sent delegates over to our colonial troops. The negotiations with General Gillard, commander of the Belgian Forces in the North, ended the next day by the signing of the capitulation of the Galla-Sidano district, which comprised all the Ethiopian territories south of the Blue Nile. Fifteen thousand Italians surrendered¹. This outstanding success proved that all those who had been convinced that the 1941 Congo Army was equal to that of 1914 were right.

The feats performed by the Army were by no means the only contribution made by the Congo to the war effort. An appeal was launched for volunteers to the Colonial Air Force and met with overwhelming success; soon the first contingent of cadets, pilots, observers, wireless operators, and mechanics intended for the Colonial Belgian Air Force was sent out to South Africa to undergo training. Thus was formed a Colonial Air Force which, together with the South African units, will protect the Congo against the onslaughts of the Nazi pirates.

Yet the interest taken in the struggle by the Colony is not confined to military operations. Two agreements dated 21st January,

¹ These were all the Italian troops south of the Nile including three generals, several hundred officers, 4,000 white soldiers and 9,000 native soldiers. The Belgians captured a considerable amount of war material.

1941, put the immense wealth of the Belgian Congo at the disposal of the Allies; one was an economic agreement, the other a financial one.

The economic agreement put at the disposal of Great Britain large quantities of raw materials necessary for the pursuit of the war. The United Kingdom guaranteed, in the manner, the purchase of 126,000 metric tons of copper, 20,000 long tons of cotton, 7,000 long tons of copal, 2,500 long tons of ground nuts, 15,000 long tons of palm kernels, as well as all supplies available of palm oil suitable for English consumption. These quantities constituted the minimum only and further purchases were not precluded.

The importance of this economic agreement has been considerably increased since the beginning of the war in Malaya. The Belgian Congo is able to deliver to the Allies greater quantities of several raw materials of high value in time of war like tin and rubber.

Under the financial agreement, the rate of exchange of the Congolese franc is fixed at 176,625 francs to one pound sterling. Arrangements are made to co-ordinate the restrictions laid down for the rational utilization of foreign exchange. The outstanding feature of this agreement is, however, that after providing for the Congo's own essential requirements and, if necessary, such advances as may be required by the Belgian Government, the whole of the Congo's gold production and foreign exchange is to be ceded to the Bank of England against payment in sterling. Inasmuch as the commercial balance of our colony is largely favourable, this arrangement entails an uninterrupted strengthening of gold amounts and currencies held at the disposal of the Allies.

A further agreement is being discussed at the present moment between Belgium and Great Britain concerning the products of the Congo. Everything seems to indicate that in the near future the Belgian Colony will play an extremely important part in supplying raw materials to the Allies.

In addition to the action taken by the Government, private efforts have multiplied. There is not a single appeal made for funds for the different war work which has not been met with patriotic enthusiasm and with a spirit of self-sacrifice above all praise. We give as an example the setting up of a committee at Leopoldville under the patronage of the Governor-General to purchase, by public subscription, fighter planes. In an appeal to the public, the Lieutenant-General Ermens made known that these planes would be put at the disposal of Belgian pilots fighting with the R.A.F. It was announced lately that an amount of 45 million francs had already been collected. (£325,000~

The relations between the Belgian Congo and her great neighbour, the Union of South Africa, are excellent. This was made evident when the Minister for the Colonies, M. de Vleeschauwer, paid a visit to Capetown where he was given a most cordial welcome. The developments in economic relations between the two countries have made great strides during the last months.

The Government of that great statesman, Field-Marshal Smuts, has in all circumstances manifested its understanding and profound sympathy for the sufferings of the Belgians; did he not give the considerable sum of £50,000 to the relief fund for Belgian Refugees in England? During April, 1941, Field-Marshal Smuts sent to the population of the Congo the following message which characterized the spirit of close collaboration between our Colony and South Africa: 'At a time when the capture of Addis Ababa is still fresh in our minds we do not wish to fail in paying tribute to our Belgian comrades who fought at our side, the sword of liberty firmly grasped in their hands. We owe them our deep-felt gratitude. Nor do we forget the Belgian doctors who succoured our wounded. They were able to fulfil their duty, thanks to the generosity of the Belgians in the Congo who bounteously contributed in supplying our military hospitals. Other Belgian units also played their vital part. In the name of my country and my fellow-countrymen I sincerely thank the population of the Belgian Congo. We face a long and difficult task. We arrived at the first stage of its successful completion, but others await us. After the restoration of peace, our comradeship will endure. A reinvigorated Africa will rise. The Belgian Congo, South Africa, and all the other young nations of this continent will be the standard-bearers of the new world. We must have faith in the future. Our common sacrifice in this war shall enable us to erect a lasting monument of liberty'.

One could not imagine a more noble tribute paid to the generous self-sacrifice, to the spirit of patriotic solidarity of the Belgian colony.

Conclusion

We have tried to give an objective account of what is happening in Belgium under the second German occupation. Our aim has not been to hide the poverty and degradation caused by a foreign occupation, nor certain deplorable lapses, nor the cleverness of the methods employed by the Germans to divide Belgians one against the other; nor have we sought to conceal the fact that the leniency of Belgian laws allowed a handful of professional traitors to resume during the present occupation activities which ought to have been made impossible after the 1914-18 war. But when one considers the extent of the influence which a nation of oppressors like the Germans can have on an oppressed nation, such as Belgium is to-day, one would be greatly mistaken if one judged the situation in the light of shameful statements made by a few hundred traitors in enemy pay the like of whom can be found in the dregs of any society. One must think of the millions of men who are silent, who suffer stoically and who act secretly. One must have actually experienced life under German domination to understand the magic bonds of faith and hope which unite the oppressed people and enable them to endure the greatest trials. The Allied nations fighting for the liberation of the world can have every confidence in the Belgian people. The immense majority of Belgians have an absolute faith in the Allied victory, and will never yield to the blandishments of the invader. To be convinced of this, one must not only note what is happening to-day and what happened during the 1914-18 occupation, but one should also recall all the foreign occupations to which Belgium has been subjected—the Spanish, the Austrian, the French, the Dutch—all of which have failed to prejudice the character of the Belgian people, and to kill her love of independence and liberty. A nation which throughout the centuries has emerged triumphantly from periods of ordeal, need fear no moral collapse as a result of a few years of Nazi occupation. The character and soul of Belgium will remain unsullied.

The drama of the national history of Belgium has been that every time a nation has attempted to gain control of the Continent of Europe, it has considered the occupation of Belgium as a symbol of supremacy. This policy can be explained by the geographical situation and by the economic importance of Belgium. This was the policy carried out by Spain when she controlled the continent in the sixteenth century; by France under Louis XIV when he tried to conquer Belgium in the seventeenth century; by Austria

when she wanted to extend her sphere of influence in the eighteenth century; by France again under Napoleon I when he established himself at Antwerp. Similarly in 1915, General Von Bissing, spokesman of Prussian Imperialism, protested against any idea of Belgium regaining her independence as we have shown in the first chapter of this book. To-day, it is the Nazis who in their press deny the Belgian nation any right to liberty. On the 26th January, 1942, the *Essen Nazional Zeitung* declared that the creation of Belgium as a neutral state constituted for England a political triumph, and for France a cultural triumph. As for the desires and aspirations of the Belgian people, the German paper did not even mention them.

During the years 1940 and 1941 the Belgian people have courageously endured one of the most cruel and painful ordeals in all their history. All the measures they had taken to ensure their security, all the sacrifices they had undergone have proved themselves to be in vain: within a single generation they have twice seen their country trampled underfoot by the same invader. Two million Belgians have been forced on to the roads as exiles, to lead a life of terror and misery. The capitulation of the Belgian army and of the King, its leader, and the collapse of the French army were terrible blows for the Belgian people. So violent was the shock that it seemed too great for human resistance to bear. Soon the nation found itself under the heel of a foreign oppressor who had prepared the occupation of Belgium with as much care as he had planned the invasion.

The Germans had a greater knowledge of the internal problems of Belgium, of her inhabitants, her customs, than of any other of the occupied territories. They made greater efforts to win over the good graces of the Belgian people than of any other conquered nation. They wanted at all costs to avoid a repetition of what had occurred during 1914-18 and they knew that if they resorted to force their regime would sooner or later be condemned irreparably to failure.

And this has actually happened. For the Belgian people have refused to adapt themselves to arbitrary measures and slavery. The hypocritical machinations of the invader, his shameful attempts at splitting the country, his methods of blackmail and corruption, have been thwarted by the common sense of the people, by the patriotic reactions of simple souls and honest folk. To-day the struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed, the butchers and the victims, is pursuing its ceaseless course, secret but relentless.

The Flemish people, wooed more earnestly by the Germans than any other people of Europe, have spurned their offers and declined

to become involved in their intrigues. To-day they share the tribulations of the Walloon people. The morale of the plundered and starving Belgian nation is magnificent and unshakable; the people feel a confidence and a faith perhaps even greater than that felt by free nations openly fighting against Hitlerism. First of all because the latter come into contact with the strength of the enemy while the oppressed people have learnt to know, above all else, his vices and crimes. One has to live under the heel of the Germans really to know what the loss of one's independence means. One has to suffer from the cynicism and the greed of the Germans before learning to hate Germany. Secondly because for all Belgians the struggle for independence coincides with the struggle for liberty; this love of liberty both political and moral, the most precious heritage handed down to them from their ancestors, has been fanned into a secret flame whose glow lights up their entire existence, fills their hearts and imaginations with a new courage and exalts their hopes.

One may say that as far as the economic exploitation of Belgium is concerned, the Germans have conscientiously followed the lessons of the previous occupation. Methods which in the past had yielded unsatisfactory or too costly results were systematically replaced by others. Those methods which had proved satisfactory and profitable to the invader instead of being applied only after two or three years, as during the 1914-18 occupation, were immediately put into force within the first few months of the 1940 occupation. Once again the invasion of Belgium had been slowly and carefully planned by the Nazis—the descendants of Prussian imperialists. Belgium, a rich and much coveted prey was this time destined to be despoiled in the shortest possible space of time, and in the most effective and dexterous manner. The old Prussian principle of Bismarck that all the conquered needed was eyes to weep with is truer than ever to-day.

Every day the German yoke becomes more brutal and more cruel. The policy of division and humiliation practised in the past by the Kaiser's men, is practised to-day by the Nazis but with greater cynicism and brutality. Every conceivable method is used to demoralize and terrorize the population. Patriotic officials are dismissed or forced to retire: many government posts are filled by shady and incompetent individuals, whose only merit was to serve the political ends of the enemy. Belgians who before the war had revealed their sympathy for the Allies are deprived of all official employment. Politicians, writers, journalists, and University professors are arrested and thrown into concentration camps. Meanwhile, shameful economic exploitation uses up the few remaining resources of an overpopulated country, which had hardly

recovered from the terrible sufferings of the 1914-18 war. But the worst ordeals are borne with stoic firmness: to-day's miseries are forgotten in thoughts of the future, and of that radiant day of deliverance. People dream of a new Belgium, better than the Belgium of pre-war days, a Belgium inspired by a nobler ideal of brotherhood, a Belgium more alive to universal problems with a stronger and better organized democracy.

The strength of these democratic feelings is proved by disillusioned remarks made by advocates of the New Order. In an editorial of the paper *Le Pays Reel*, the Rexist journalist Jose Streeel recently confessed that in occupied Belgium 'Most of the time it is enough simply not to have democratic ideas to be called a traitor'.

The Belgian people realize that the Allied victory will not only bring about the liberation of the oppressed peoples, but will also bring with it a way of life, a conception of the world, and that it will be the conquerors who will impose their conceptions on a liberated Europe.

The Belgian nation as a whole feels nothing but gratitude and admiration for Great Britain, who faced alone the Axis powers and thus kept alive the hopes of the oppressed peoples. The exploits of the heroic and formidable Russian Army have strengthened their confidence in the future. But the entry into the war of the United States has transformed this confidence into complete, glorious, unshakable certainty which no coercion or machination on the part of the invader can destroy.

These feelings are shared by Belgians outside occupied territory who have rallied together to continue the fight under the leadership of the Government in London; they have decided to throw into the struggle all that was left to them: their colony, their fleet, their gold, and the lives of all those who, in Great Britain, are serving under the national colours. Putting as she does every ounce of strength into one mighty effort, the Belgian nation has no wish to die. She reminds the world of all that her sons have created in the spheres of science and art, of the high degree of intellectual culture and social progress she had bestowed on her citizens, of the tremendous effort she had made to defend her territory. At the present time not a day goes by but heroes die for her on the sea or in the sky and martyrs meet death from brutal Nazi bullets.

The sacrifice of so much wealth and of so many lives bestows upon her to-day, as it did in the past, the incontractible right to live as a free and independent nation.

APPENDIX I

SPEECH OF M. PIERLOT CONCERNING THE
SECRETARIES-GENERAL

In a previous talk I recalled the reasons why the Belgian Government is in London.

This Government was properly elected. It managed the affairs of the country and enjoyed the confidence of the Chambers until the 10th May, 1940. Since, owing to the enemy occupation, all the other organs of national sovereignty have ceased to function, all power now falls into its hands in accordance with constitutional principles.

The power of the state can only be represented by one body. It cannot belong at one and the same time to the legal Government established in London, and to what certain people would have us believe is a Government with its headquarters in Brussels, alongside the German Governor-General. The same state cannot have two lawful Governments, issuing at the same time contradictory laws and decrees. Such duality can only exist in the imagination. I have already told you and I am telling you again: you must choose. You must either be on the side of the Government which fights for victory or accept a usurped power which is held together only by the support of the enemy. It is our duty as well as our right to ask all Belgians to make this choice once and for all. You fully realize how important it is to have a Belgian Government taking its place among the other free Governments at war with Germany, resolved to continue the struggle until the common victory is won. You understand that only the nations who hold to the end will have their say in the peace negotiations on which the fate of Belgium will depend. You understand also that this Government owes its moral authority to the fact that it acts in accordance with the will of the people. If our voice is heard by the Allied Powers, and if they consider our help is important, it is thanks to your resistance: it is also because the whole world knows the Belgian people wants, as we do, the continuation of the struggle until final victory. And that is why you in Belgium and we here in England can achieve nothing one without the other. The enemy is fully conscious of this, and, therefore, by means of propaganda is redoubling his efforts to disunite us, so that he can separate Belgium from this league of invaded, but by no means submissive peoples, who from Narvik to Bordeaux and from Nantes to Athens shout 'No' in reply to Hitler's claim to enforce in Europe that new form of slavery which he calls a new order.

I have explained to you what are the legitimate functions of the Secretaries-General. The law of the 10th May, 1940, had only one aim: to ensure that the administrative life of the country under foreign occupation was carried out by the division of responsibility. To this end the Government's duty was to leave their national soil in order to remove political power from the enemy's grasp. What was the use of taking this

precaution if it was only to leave behind in occupied Belgium another authority with the same powers as the absent authority and thereby surrendering to the invader all constitutional rights and sovereign power. Can one imagine anyone being in favour of such inconsistency?

When the ministers left the capital they told the Secretaries-General, and through their agency the local authorities what the main lines of their policy should be during the occupation. These rules were incorporated in the law of the 10th May, 1940, and other existing laws. The Government hereby put the Secretaries-General on their guard against collaborating with the enemy on the grounds that this would be the lesser of two evils. The Government knew with whom it had to deal—with officials whom they knew, just as they in turn were known by their subordinates. You will have no difficulty in believing me when I tell you that never for a moment did it enter our heads that one day the Secretaries-General in charge would be replaced thanks to an elaborate game of resignations and co-options directed by the occupation authorities; never did we think that we would ever see holding office together such an astonishing collection of men—the former Secretaries-General appointed by the King, the trustees of the Government's instructions and responsible for carrying them out, and the newcomers appointed because they enjoyed the favours and good graces of the enemy. The plan which later became the law of the 10th May, 1940, would never have been adopted, nor would it have been presented if it had been thought that it was liable to such an interpretation and capable of producing such consequences,

How can one judge a policy carried out in these conditions, under the alleged protection of Belgian law?

How can the directors of the Ministry of Labour quote the law as an authority when they undertake to supply Germany with man-power? The least one can say about their policy is that it has given some semblance of truth to the reproach that they deprived the workers of work, by various forms of coercion, both direct and indirect, such as threats, deportation and the suppression of the little daily bread they still have.

Are the measures put into effect by the Department for Economic Affairs, in accordance with the text and spirit of our laws, measures which have as their avowed aim the incorporation of the whole of Belgian industrial activity into the German economic system; in other words to make every one of our undertakings a cog in the German war machine which is directed against the Allies, against Belgium herself?

Can any lawyer be found, or any Belgian, who will accept as legitimate the systematic organization of dictatorship which is in process of being established in the Ministry of the Interior, on the ruins of our central administrations and our local liberties? By taking to itself one after another the most diverse functions hitherto performed by other Departments, the Ministry of the Interior is undergoing colossal development. By eliminating from the administrative sphere everything that is opposed to the enemy's designs, it creates vacancies and multiplies the opportunities for appointing new governors, district commissioners, burgomasters and aldermen. It appoints and dismisses teachers, thereby assuming a

right never exercised by the central power. It is preparing to lay hands on the gendarmerie also. There is no end to the list of these actions. Never since the foundation of the Belgian State in its modern form has any authority, however high, exercised in our country such a mass of functions as are now to be exercised by a so-called official responsible in practice to no one but the German Governor-General in Belgium.

Need I say more? Is that applying the law! No! It is not legality: It is a caricature of legality. It has no relation to Belgian legislation, unless, indeed, it invokes the penal laws which protect the security of the State against criminal undertakings.

I do not propose to raise here the juridical considerations which are the business of specialists. I appeal to Belgian opinion as a whole, to its good sense and its feeling for the interest of our country, and I say: 'Do you not think that there has been enough of all this?' Up to now, perhaps, you may have hesitated to give free rein to your amazement and indignation at what is being done illegally in the name of national unity. You may have thought that the desire to preserve as far as possible a Belgian administration explained and even excused many things. But there is a limit to everything, and that limit has been exceeded. Away with abuses! Let the Germans carry out their own policy. The Belgian officials are not called upon to give their name to it.

Understand me well: I have nothing to say about the proper co-operation within the limits of the Hague Convention, which an occupied country can and should afford to the occupying power, however painful that obligation may be. To fulfil that obligation is to serve the national interest. It is that interest, and not the interests and wishes of the enemy, that should regulate your conduct.

An end must be made of the present confusion. Every man must consider and get a clear view of his duty. He must be able to decide where prudence ends and complacency begins and where treason is committed. To adopt an indefinite attitude would be to jeopardize the possibility of restoration, because the very notion of service to the State would in the end give way to indifference and the acceptance of everything.

Woe to those who having reached the limit of what is or was tolerable refuse to halt on the road to disaster or to listen to the final warnings. When our country is liberated there will be a return to a healthier conception of public law. It will be inspired not only by the opinions of sensible jurists but by the national feelings restored to freedom of expression. The country will be indulgent to those who err in good faith. It will be severe towards guilty complacency. With traitors it will be merciless.

APPENDIX II
BELGIUM AT WAR

1. *The Belgian Clergy in the War.*

His Eminence Cardinal Van Roey delivered the following address at the Congress of Catholic and Intellectual Belgian Youth held in Wavre Notre Dame, on the 11th August, 1941:

‘War is a crime just as the unwarranted invasion of a country is a crime.

It is often said that whatever the form of Government, the Church will always adapt itself to it. What should be our attitude to this statement constantly propagated by the spoken and printed word? First of all, let us make a distinction. The Church adapts itself to all forms of Government provided the latter safeguard liberty and do not outrage the human conscience.

If a regime violates freedom of conscience, then the Church does not adapt itself. Amongst bearable regimes important distinctions must be made. For herself the Church does not really mind whether she lives under a monarchy or a republic, under a democratic regime or an autarchic one; provided these forms of Government safeguard and maintain the freedom of the Church, that is to say provided they allow her to work with all her power and with all the means which are rightfully hers, for the good of men’s souls, then she will adapt herself.

Without that she will certainly not adapt herself.

Does the Church adapt itself to the regime now forced upon the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg where priests are thrown into prison, and nuns driven from convents? No. The Church, like the human organism, can live in several climates, can adapt itself to various conditions of life, but it cannot live in a climate and under conditions which would stifle and asphyxiate her. Moreover, the Church does exist in different countries under forms of Government which are more or less tolerable. In North America, for instance, we find that the Church is disestablished. But apart from that, the Church enjoys entire freedom in all spheres.

Italy and Portugal are both autocracies. But what a difference in the treatment meted out to the Church in these two countries! In Germany conditions are several degrees worse, in fact they are completely deplorable. Do you remember the “Mit Brennender Sorge”? Since then the situation has not improved.

In Belgium and Holland the Church enjoyed liberty.

The Church, therefore, in order to accomplish its divine mission, desires the most favourable form of Government possible; she is striving to achieve this and urging Catholics to do likewise. Thus it is wrong for Catholics to collaborate in the establishment of a tyrannical regime; indeed they have an obligation to work with those who try to resist such a regime. They must not collaborate with those who are in favour of establishing this regime in Belgium.

But, people will no doubt put forward the objection that the Nazi regime is not as wicked or as harmful as is supposed. A few restrictions would not be unwelcome. The Church, that is to say the Bishops, the priests, the monks have deviated from their legitimate path. The Church, it is said, is concerned only with souls; the church, the altar, the confessional box and the pulpit are the limits of the priests' domain. They should spread the Gospel, administer the Sacraments and lead people in worship. All the rest belongs to the State. It would perhaps be desirable, even as far as the rest goes, to restrict the influence of the State. It would not be a bad thing simply to render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's.

What must be our reply to all that? The word of our Lord is true, and still applicable, and the Church is its champion. But from the common sense point of view alone, the role of the State is complementary. This will be sufficiently emphasized during the present Congress.

As for the Church, she claims everything which belongs to God: the Gospel, all the truth of the Gospel, she claims it in every sphere. Our Lord enjoined his Church to teach all this. Do you remember the declaration of the Austrian Episcopacy, made by Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna the day after the *Anschluss*. On the 8th March, 1938, the Cardinal wrote: "In present circumstances it is necessary to emphasize that the duty of the Church is the care of souls . . . through worship, the sacraments and preaching. She must remain aloof from all else." But the Cardinal was summoned to Rome and the Pope led him back on to the right path. The Cardinal made a further declaration during April of the same year in which he said: "The Concordat must be respected in its entirety; the scholastic and instructional training and the Catholic youth organization must be maintained, hostile propaganda must cease, the Church must be able to exercise her rights of proclaiming and defending the Catholic faith in every sphere of human life and with all the means at her disposal." Such is the doctrine of the Church.

In reality people grudge the Church her freedom; they grudge the sacred rights of the human conscience. It is our duty to open men's eyes and to be able to recognize and distinguish the dangers which lie around them. In accordance with the dictates of our conscience we must ward off and fight against these dangers.

We must have faith in Providence, but also we must act effectively in this connection so that our sacred authority be once more established.

Some weeks ago I received a letter from an eminent French Catholic. He said that in France Catholics were resigned to defeat and to collaboration. He asked me whether in Belgium there might not arise a Jeremiah to preach resignation once again. Jeremiah in his time was a prophet of God who also preached collaboration. Everybody was against him but he was right.

If I had to reply to this good Frenchman, I would say more or less as follows: First of all we belong to the New Testament, therefore, it is useless to go back to the Old Testament to find out what to do. Then, Jeremiah was constrained by God; he affirms many times that he is speaking against his own will and convictions. Moreover, it was a matter of the

choice of two evils . . . to collaborate with Egypt or with Babylon. Both were enemies of his people who inclined towards Egypt. God obliged Jeremiah to say No: salvation will come from an alliance with Babylon.

Five centuries ago France was invaded by the English. Everyone was resigned to collaboration: Paris, Sorbonne, the Court, and the Bishops, all supported the English. Nevertheless, a maid appeared inspired by God, and in defiance of everybody she fought collaboration: "we must drive these people out of France." She was right.

To-day, we have neither a Joan of Arc nor a Jeremiah but perhaps they are not indispensable. The trend of events as well as all kinds of indications show this to be true. Reason and good sense point the road of confidence and resistance because we know that our country will be restored and will live again.

This is what I wanted to tell you so that your actions may always be inspired by these rules of conduct. Wherever necessary, wherever useful, be guided accordingly.'

MAKING FUN OF THE GERMANS

A Belgian student who recently escaped from Brussels tells in the weekly paper *La Belgique Indépendante* appearing in London the following story which is being circulated in occupied Belgium: An English and a German airman both crashed during an aerial combat over England.

Both were wounded and looked after in the same hospital.

During their convalescence the German asked the Englishman, 'What will you do when the war is over?'

'I'll go in for sport,' replied the Englishman, 'cricket and golf.' 'And what will you do?'

'Oh,' said the German, 'I'll buy a bicycle and tour Grrrrreater Germany.'

'Well, well,' said the Englishman, 'and what will you do in the afternoon?'

In occupied Belgium the story is told of how the Germans have succeeded in disembarking at three points in Great Britain; cemeteries, hospitals, and prisons.

The broadcasts from the London radio are heard everywhere in Belgium and exercise a great influence on public opinion. According to news from occupied territory 98 per cent of the Belgians listen in to London. The secret newspapers base their articles on B.B.C. news. The most widely circulated of these papers are: *La Libre Belgique*, *Le Vrai Belge*, and *Vrij Belge*.

Here is an amusing story about the radio:—

A German officer asked a Belgian the time. The Belgian pretended not to understand; a little girl was passing and shouted to him: 'It's a quarter past seven.' The officer, very intrigued at finding that this little girl could tell him the time without looking at a watch, said to her: 'Little girl, how do you know that it's a quarter past seven?' and the kid replied: 'Don't you see that there is nobody in the streets. This is the time for the broadcast from England. Everybody is at home.'

An Antwerp café proprietor and one of his customers were condemned by the German Military Court to two years' and eight months' imprisonment for having listened to and propagated London broadcasts.

The Flemish extremist paper *Volk en Staat* appearing at Antwerp felt so uneasy about the influence exercised by these broadcasts, that it would welcome the confiscation of all wireless sets in certain districts where it has been proved that everybody listens in to London.

A German civilian was closely watching a lady reading a book in a Brussels tram when he suddenly noticed these words written in large letters on a book mark, 'Patience does not imply surrender; silence does not imply approval.'

Knowing that the other passengers would side wholeheartedly with the lady, the German dared not make himself known but told the story to the *Brüsseler Zeitung*.

'Be quick, miss, and serve me. I am in a hurry. I've got to invade England!' That's what you hear customers saying in Brussels shops when they want to poke fun at the Germans. This story has been told by Belgians who recently left occupied territory.

In the cinemas, when German propaganda films are inserted in the programme, people laugh, since they are not allowed to demonstrate. When the exaggerated losses of the British Navy are announced the audience laugh so much that the show has occasionally to be interrupted.

'Our English teacher is a fine fellow,' declared a Brussels schoolgirl to her friend. 'He comments on the broadcast from England. Victory is dead sure.'

This conversation held openly in a No. 83 tram dismayed a contributor to the *Nouveau Journal*, a paper published under German control.

The scene of this story is supposed to take place at Antwerp in a tram. Two workmen were arguing aloud. One of them exclaimed 'I am absolutely fed up. I would rather work twelve hours a day for the Germans than two hours for the Belgians'. The German officer interrupted, 'Are you sure of what you have just said, or are you just bragging?'

'When an Antwerp man makes a statement,' said the workman, 'he never goes back on his word.'

'Very well,' said the officer, 'if such is the case you won't mind repeating over the wireless what you have just said.'

The workman was dragged in front of the microphone and in a steady voice he repeated his declaration: 'Of course I would prefer to work twelve hours a day for the Germans rather than two hours for the Belgians.' The announcer, feeling rather uncomfortable, sought to brighten up the interview. 'What is your trade?' he asked.

'Grave-digger,' the workman replied simply.

The following story was told in Brussels: Hitler and Goering went to Calais and stood sadly looking at the English Channel.

After a while Goering said to Hitler: 'Adolph, I remember having learned at school the story of a man who divided the sea to enable his army to cross on dry land, but I think he was a Jew.'

Hitler sent for Himmler and asked him to bring him a Rabbi.

After much searching Himmler succeeded in finding a Rabbi and brought him to Hitler, who very politely asked the Rabbi:

'Is it true that a man of your race succeeded in getting his army across the dry bed of the sea?'

'Yes,' said the Rabbi, 'it was Moses'.

'Where is he?'

'He has been dead a long time.'

'But how did he do it?'

'By striking the sea with a stick given to him by God.'
 'And where is the stick now?' asked Hitler with great curiosity.
 'In the British Museum,' replied the Rabbi.

The German censorship and the editorial staff of a German-controlled newspaper published at Verviers were victims of a practical joke.

Under the title of 'Holidays 1941' some lines of poetry were sent to the paper which lost no time in publishing them. The readers who knew what to expect soon discovered them to be an acrostic. Read one after the other the first letter of each line meant: 'V, R.A.F., BRITISH VICTORY.'

The Germans understood . . . but too late. Being unable to laugh, they lost their tempers and the curfew was ordered for 8 o'clock in the evening.

In the Liège edition of *La Libre Belgique* the following story was found:

Recently there was a great to-do in a Belgian family: a German officer was coming to lodge with them. Betty (aged 6) was told how to behave. Papa told her time and time again: 'When the Boche is here don't ask me to get London.' 'And when you want to talk about the war, don't forget to say the Germans and not the Boches as we do now.'

The officer came. Everything went off very well for the first few days. The youngster behaved herself perfectly, for his part, the officer remembering his own home and the children he had left behind spoilt his host's child. Then one fine day the inevitable question was asked—it was by the way preceded by a magnificent piece of chocolate: 'Do you like the English?' 'Oh no,' replied Betty innocently, 'not at all.' 'They are just dirty Boches.'

Here is a little story told in occupied Belgium:

Mussolini, while inspecting an air field in Italy, assembled 28 pilots and gave them orders to bomb London: 'My brave airmen,' he said, 'do your duty and come back safe and sound.' 28 planes took off and Mussolini awaited their return. Soon they came back in single file and Mussolini counted them as they flew over '... 26, 27, 28 ...'. But there were then more planes than at the beginning: there were now 29. Mussolini, who could hardly believe his eyes, asked for an explanation. 'Oh, that's quite normal,' was the reply given, 'the 29th is the British plane chasing ours.'

The Liège correspondent of *La Libre Belgique*, the secret newspaper circulated in occupied territory, wrote:

On Sunday, an immense crowd attended a football match. The referee took an unjust decision. Immediately a cry arose from the crowd, 'None of your Darlan tricks here!' These words had a tremendous success with the crowd, which says a good deal for the feelings of our population.

In the Liège region, the following story is going round : it was printed by the local edition of *La Libre Belgique*.

Dusty, his clothes stained and covered with mud and completely unrecognizable, a soldier appeared before good St. Peter in Paradise. The following dialogue took place:

'Well, my brave fellow, did you die for your country?'

'Yes, St. Peter.'

'What nationality are you, English, French, Belgian?'

'No, St. Peter.'

'Yugoslavian then, or Grecian?'

'No.'

'But what nationality are you?'

'German, St. Peter.'

'Liar! It's not true! You can't be German. I read the German communiqué every day, and I never see any loss of life reported. In order to teach you to tell the truth, you will begin by spending two hundred years in purgatory.'

In a large market town in occupied Belgium, a peasant was suspected of slaughtering cattle in secret.

Inspectors arrived unexpectedly at his house with a search warrant. The peasant protested, then acquiesced. During the visit he begged them in a whisper not to go into one room where he said his grandmother was lying very ill. The old woman might die of shock if she saw them.

The inspectors slipped quietly into the old woman's room.

The curtains were drawn and the room was in darkness. Having produced sufficient light to see about them, they perceived in the semi-darkness of the bed a strange and terrifying form. Two horns emerged from the sheets which were stained with blood.

'If those aren't the horns of the devil, they belong to a cow,' said one of the inspectors.

He was right, as you might expect. Shortly before their arrival the peasant had killed the cow, and to avoid detection had hidden it in the bed.

Resistance to the occupation authorities manifests itself in the most varied forms. A brave young student who had taken part in the anti-Hitler demonstrations of the 11th November left Brussels and after many adventures reached Great Britain. She told a few of the stories which are going around in Belgium. Here is one of the best: 'A German officer got on to a tram and stood on the foot of a Belgian who lost his temper and struck him. The officer had hardly time to recover from his astonishment before another Belgian got up and did likewise. They were arrested. The first one was questioned and he replied that maddened by pain he had been unable to repress this gesture.

'But what about you,' the other one was asked, 'what reasons can you give for your action?'

'Oh,' he replied, 'I thought we already had the right to do it.'

APPENDIX IV

This is one of the first lists to be compiled of Belgians executed by the Germans during recent months.

This list only contains the names of Belgians whose execution was made public during recent months in occupied territory either on the wireless or in the press. It does not mention those who were executed without trial by the Gestapo, those who died as a result of ill-treatment in concentration camps, or those who were tried in secret. One will notice the frequency with which the death penalty is inflicted on those who helped British airmen.

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Name.</i>	<i>Reason for Sentence.</i>	
12.8.41	Overmans . . .	For having obtained food and clothing for English airmen.	Death penalty
12.8.41	Greefkens . . .	" " "	" "
24.8.41	Joseph Koekelbergh .	For spying.	" "
24.8.41	Guillaume Koekelbergh	" "	" "
9.9.41	Lucie Vis . . .	For having helped and offered hospitality to a British airman.	" "
9.9.41	Constance Fraipont .	" " "	" "
9.9.41	Emile Fraipont . .	" " "	" "
19.9.41	Janssen . . .	For having attacked a German soldier.	" "
21.10.41	Emile Foucart . .	Communist propaganda and sabotage.	" "
23.10.41	Camille Mogenat or Mogenet.	For spying.	" "
23.10.41	Jean Derave . . .	" " "	" "
23.10.41	Albert Dehaway(?) .	" " "	" "
18.11.41	Maurice Carlier . .	" " "	" "
25.11.41	Louis Geys . . .	Sabotage—unlawful use of explosives.	" "
25.11.41	Robert Gendarme . .	" " "	" "
25.11.41	Lambert Pallen . .	" " "	" "
25.11.41	George Bechont . .	" " "	" "
25.11.41	George Gadisseur . .	" " "	" "
29.11.41	Jules van de Walle .	Serious acts of sabotage and the creation of communistic groups of saboteurs.	" "
29.11.41	Jan de Renty . . .	" " "	" "
29.11.41	Guillaume Hocke . .	Acts of sabotage and the creation of communistic groups of saboteurs.	" "
29.11.41	Arthur Coeme . . .	" " "	" "
29.11.41	Louis Lenaerts . .	" " "	" "
3.12.41	Jean Philippes . .	Reason unknown.	" "
3.12.41	Joseph George Deckers	" " "	" "
3.12.41	Paul Parin . . .	" " "	" "
11.12.41	Albert Thion . . .	For having helped the English.	" "
11.12.41	Richard van de Walle .	" " "	" "
22.12.41	Ernest Omer . . .	Possession of firearms.	" "
22.12.41	Arthur Colme . . .	" " "	" "
22.12.41	Francois Medart . .	" " "	" "

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Name.</i>	<i>Reason for Sentence.</i>	<i>Sentence.</i>
22.12.41	Jean Derval . . .	Possession of firearms.	Death penalty
23. 1.42	Adelin Hartveld . . .	Help given to the enemy.	" "
23. 1.42	Abraham Fogelbaum . . .	" " "	" "
23. 1.42	Edward van Herbruggen . . .	" " "	" "
23. 1.42	Edgard Leeve(?) . . .	" " "	" "
23. 1.42	Hubert Heymans . . .	" " "	" "
23. 1.42	Guy Georges Mottard . . .	" " "	" "
23. 1.42	J. Charlier . . .	For having "hidden" English airmen.	" "
23. 1.42	Armand Durant . . .	" " "	" "
27. 1.42	Jules Lienaerts . . .	Illegal "possession" of "fire- arms; preparation and dis- tribution of anti-German pamphlets.	" "
27. 1.42	Robert Letort . . .	*Help given to the enemy.	" "
27. 1.42	Maurice Ghislain . . .	" " "	" "
27. 1.42	Robert Wiesenberg . . .	Illegal "possession" of fire- arms; preparation and dis- tribution of anti-German pamphlets.	" "
27. 1.42	Roger Libion . . .	" " "	" "
15. 9.41	At the present moment unknown.	Help "given to the enemy; espionage; issuing copies of anti-German tracts.	" "
15. 1.42	At the present moment unknown.	Unknown	" "
15. 1.42	Ferdinand Custers . . .	For having attacked a German feldwebel.	" "
30. 1.42	Sylvain Vandevælde . . .	For having sheltered an English airman.	" "
30. 1.42	Joseph Franco . . .	For help given to the enemy and communistic plots.	" "
30. 1.42	De Jongh . . .	" " "	" "
27. 1.42	Chrétien Nijkers . . .	Reason unknown. "	" "
27. 1.42	Richard Soupart . . .	For help given to the enemy; anti-German propaganda; attacks on German soldiers; possession of arms and munitions.	" "
27. 1.42	Henri Jouvenois . . .	Anti-German propaganda and help given to the Allies.	" "
27. 1.42	Antoine van Geel . . .	For having formed depots of arms and explosives.	" "
27. 1.42	Charles Chasseur . . .	" " "	" "

THEY DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY

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